

Flying Snake

A Journal of
Cryptozoology, Folklore and Forteana

Volume 1 Issue 2

October 2011

£3



- *In This Issue:* Pine Martens in Derbyshire, 1996-2011 •
- Red Heifer and 3rd Temple • Spotted Otter in Ireland •
- Lazarus Syndrome • Oddity in Forest of Dean • Weird
- Worms • And More!

ABOUT FLYING SNAKE

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“For I pray God for the introduction of new creatures into this island. For I pray God for the ostriches of Salisbury Plain, the beavers of the Medway and silver fish of Thames.” Christopher Smart, `Rejoice in the Lamb`. Poet, naturalist, lunatic (1722-1771)

Dr Devo has been busy in his Recombinant DNA Parlour since Flying Snake 1 was published in April, researching and requesting new cryptozoological and Fortean articles from the outer fringes of these disciplines and whilst trying to get out of his yellow plastic jump suit, has managed to put together the cocktail of essays you now have before you. I must admit my hyper-sensitive conscience has been troubled by the lack of “ mainstream” cryptozoology in issues 1 and 2. However, I believe these areas are well covered elsewhere. By “ mainstream” I mean Alien Big Cats and the Loch Ness Monster for example. Of course what is mainstream to me may not be the same to you. Lizzy Clancy has written about the Lazarus Syndrome so I am not altogether obsessed with the totally obscure: I hope you are Biblically up to scratch - this is not about the 1970s folk band Lazarus and I hope you will find much to interest you here.

Talking about the Loch Ness Monster, the other day I was told of a sighting in the early 1970s by someone I trust which I'm hoping she'll allow me to write about in issue 3 so that's something to look forward to. I am also busy with my approximately twice a week 'Muirhead's Mysteries' blog on Cryptozoology On-line which Jon Downes of the Centre for Fortean Zoology has decided to produce in book form in about two years or so. The Mystery Animals of Hong Kong book continues to gather new information like a Ropen gathers fish or even dead human bodies if some sources are to be believed. Meanwhile the non-cryptozoological part of my life continues, an endless round of karaoke, Oxfam, library visits, drinking Rubicon fizzy Lychee flavoured drink, recording the rainfall and other somewhat geekish activities. But enough about me, let's think about you for a while.....Please read on! And enjoy .

“ It is the simple truth that man does differ from the brutes in kind and not in degree; and the proof of it is here: that it sounds like a truism to say that the most primitive man drew a picture of a monkey and that it sounds like a joke to say that the most intelligent monkey drew a picture of a man. Something of division and disproportion has appeared; and it is unique. Art is the signature of man.” G.K.Chesterton Journalist, theologian (1874-1936)



A Strange Creature in the Forest of Dean, 1924

Richard Muirhead

I came across this story in the mid 1990s but dumped it because I thought it too weird!-Typical.Thanks to Dave Tuffley for permission to quote from the newspaper extract below. Thanks to Rob Wilkes and his father for drawing my attention to this story about 20 years ago.

Dean Forest Guardian 15th August 1924

Strange animal found in coal mine

An amazing amount of space was devoted by newspapers,although apparently overwhelmed with news of national importance (to wit) the budget, concerning a journalistic story sent from the Forest about a “living fossil.” Miners working on the bank of the Poolway Level, near Coleford,discovered in the coal that they were handling for transport,what appeared to be the body of an animal 14 inches in height. The animal showed signs of life for about a hour. The object was left on the coal bank for about a night and the next day it had disappeared. On this raw material a monumental amount of conjecture has been superimposed and promptly demolished. South Wales Contemporary has been giving a half column about the discovery and went to the trouble of contacting one of the most distinguished naturalists in Wales. After he had finished laughing he said this “This is the answer - a bat! A bat at this time of year fills every condition except that of size.” And the estimate given by our correspondent is admittedly that of nervous men afraid of a weird creature. A bat hibernating through the cold months seeks a cave or crevice and there hangs with head downwards with its wings so tightly pressed behind it that looking at it from the front or above as it fell on its back they could not have seen and would have given the impression of an armless trunk with well arched shoulders. Shaken from its rocky perch or crevice and fallen and would have partly awoken a month too early and would lie almost without movement and with no effect to escape.

We have made no further reference to the mater than above but for the fact that so reliable a witness as Mr Leslie Jones,the discoverer, remains so steady in his belief that the discovery was something out of the ordinary and certainly no bat. He is indignant that anyone should imply that he does not know a bat when he sees one. He claims to be well versed in fossils and being a well known ambulance man, nothing will move him from the fact that the creature had life.



It was on Saturday previous to Easter [April 20th -Richard] and working in the pit bank at Poolway Level owned by Mr Amos Brown of Wynols Hill, that the incident occurred. The previous day the men employed at the colliery had cut through a piece of coal into the original workings of what is now styled the New Hawkins Colliery, of which we believe there is no record at all at the Crown Office.

Mr Jones was using a shovel getting coal ready for transport when he saw a movement amongst the coal which had been taken from the old workings. He became interested enough to investigate. He immediately saw that the shovel had struck a small object, very much resembling a human being which he threw on top of the bank. Calling his father and Mr Amos Brown together with a passer-by named Tye, they proceeded to examine the object of attraction and were astounded to find it still living. The shovel had struck it on its hind-quarter. With the aid of sticks, they made a thorough examination with the exception that it possessed no arms, they declared that the creature was almost a perfect model of a human body and it was estimated to weigh nearly two pounds. It was from 12 to 14 inches long and had a round head the size of a teacup. With ears, eyes, nose, mouth and tongue and with teeth in both jaws. It was entirely covered with hair of a brown colour that on the face being slightly shorter than that on the body. The hair on the body was nearly an inch in length. The body was some 9 inches in circumference and the jointing of the legs and feet were perfect, even to toes and nails. The formation of the mouth was also perfect and the tongue was of a pink colour and rounded off. Although the creature was seen by several people at the time, no one thought it of any interest and the object was left on the bank when work finished for the day.

On Easter Sunday morning, Mr Jones was sufficiently concerned to visit the spot again only to find no evidence of the previous days find and continued searchings have failed to bring the object to light again. In most quarters the story is laughed at but not by the men who affirm that the remarkable little creature was more like a human being than anything else. It was thought that someone who had heard of the discovery, secured it but even now hope is entertained of its whereabouts. Mr Jones scoffs at the suggestion that it was a hibernating bat, referring to the fact he has yet to see a bat the size of a kitten, weighing in at nearly two pounds.

He concluded the interview with our representative by saying that the examination made was very thorough and the naturalist's opinion may have been arrived at by the reports that the head of the creature was about the size of a peacock, which was an understatement. (1)



Significantly, the creature was covered in hair and although compared to a bat, wings are not mentioned. Could it have been an aborted foetus? The largest bat it could have been would possibly be a Mouse-eared bat (*Myotis myotis*). Or the Greater Horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*). One could have strayed from near the South Coast of Britain to the Forest of Dean and these bats use caves. Poor lighting, shadows and imagination could have caused the observer to mistake several greater horseshoe bats in a tight cluster as one bat. Supposing it was a bat and that is a big supposition, could it have been an escaped fruit bat? Or perhaps it was an owl? We will probably never know.

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1. Dean Forest Guardian August 15th 1924



Lazarus Syndrome

Lizzy Clancy

They took therefore the stone away. And Jesus lifting up his eyes, said: Father, I give thee thanks that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people who stand about have I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. When he had said these things, he cried with a loud voice: Lazarus, come forth. And presently he that had been dead came forth, bound feet and hands with winding bands. And his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus said to them: Loose him and let him go. (John 11: 41-45)

This is how the story of Lazarus's resurrection four days after his death is related in the Bible. This event is believed by many to be one of Christ's most important miracles, but is by no means a singular occurrence.

61-year old Daphne Banks was seen to be breathing just moments before her body was due to be refrigerated in the hospital morgue. Her own doctor had pronounced dead at her home in the early hours of New Year's Day 1996. The police had been called because the GP believed a post-mortem should be carried out ; hence Mrs Banks's transfer to the hospital. The lady's vicar seemed to agree with Mr Banks that a miracle had occurred. The apparent death of Mrs Banks had described as ` sudden` , which is a feature that cases of Lazarus Syndrome share in common.

It later transpired that after epilepsy and mobility problems caused Mrs Banks to be unable to go out very much, she became increasingly depressed and had taken an overdose. Just a week later Daphne Banks was able to go home, in near-enough perfect health, notwithstanding the health conditions she already had.

In 2009 twenty-three-year old Michael Wilkinson was rushed to hospital in Preston and pronounced dead of a heart condition only doctors to discover a pulse half an hour after fifteen minutes of attempts to resuscitate him had failed. Unfortunately, Mr Wilkinson's recovery did not last very long and he finally died two days later after being moved to the intensive care unit.



`Lazarus syndrome or autoresuscitation after failed cardiopulmonary resuscitation is the spontaneous return of circulation after failed attempts at resuscitation` according to Wikipedia. An article in the *Daily Mail* puts the worldwide total of cases at 38, as does the conditions entry in the Free Online Medical Dictionary, though other sources put the total at variously twenty-four and twenty-five.

Dr Bruce Ben-David, in his online article **Survival After Failed Intraoperative Resuscitation: A Case of “Lazarus Syndrome”** suggests the possibility that a large number of cases exist but go unreported because of health professionals` fear of accusations of negligence or exaggeration. He also notes that it may be possible that such bizarre cases cause surgeons to doubt their own observations of the patient in question. Dr Ben-David also draws on previous studies to suggest a variety of potential causes of Lazarus Syndrome, including that the body may, for whatever reason, delay sending adrenalin to the heart when a patient goes into arrest, so that when it eventually does arrive, it kick-starts the heart after doctors have thought the patient already dead. He cites a colleague who advises a ten-minute period after apparent death for observation in case a patient returns to health.

But what about Lazarus himself? Of the cases I have discovered in my research I have yet to find a recent example of apparent resurrection where the formerly-deceased came back to life after much more than several minutes. Every one of them appears to have had their miracle within a day at the very most. Both Lazarus and Christ were supposed to have been raised four and three days respectively after their internment.

Rodney Davies suggests in *The Lazarus Syndrome* that Lazarus may not have actually been dead but in a cataleptic state. He cites Jesus`s apparent nonchalance at the news that his friend was gravely ill and Christ`s assertion before setting off for Bethany that Lazarus was only sleeping. Mr Davies also makes the point that often those in a `cataleptic` trance can be brought out of it if shouted at and Jesus is reported to have `cried with a loud voice` before Lazarus came forth. Davies says that decomposition hadn`t set in with Lazarus`s body and that this is further evidence of trance or coma rather than true death. However, I am not aware of any documentation of Lazarus`s body being in perfect condition upon his recovery, so it would seem that Davies is assuming there was no putrefaction based on the idea that Lazarus had not been dead.



Also, Jewish custom at the time of Christ actually dictated that the tomb was re-opened after three days in all cases just in case the 'deceased' was actually not deceased after all. Upon determining that the person really was gone to the hereafter, perfume and oil were applied and the tomb was re-sealed for another twelve months. It would not make sense for Martha to advise Jesus that her brother's body 'stinketh' if she had not found that to be the case the day before when she and her family had opened the tomb.

In the case of Jesus himself, this custom explains the women's return to the tomb on the Sunday morning, though the traditional explanation is that the onset of the Sabbath prevented the full burial rituals being performed. And from a non-Christian perspective, it could go some way to explaining the resurrection story as an early case of Lazarus Syndrome, though many argue that the suffering from scourging and crucifixion could not allow for this possibility.

Whether you believe in miracles or not, Lazarus Syndrome, while being widely accepted as a genuine medical condition in mainstream science, has been a Godsend of some description for those who thought they had lost their loved ones only to have them delivered safely to them again.

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from 1984***



'U.F.O. Discovery'. Translation by Mr Shanshun Li from
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FLYING SNAKES

PART TWO

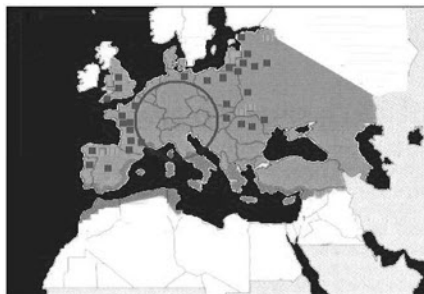
Dale Drinnon

This article is part two of Dale Drinnon's original blog which first appeared in Cryptozoology Online January 23rd 2011

" I hypothesize that at the beginning of the post-glacial(recent) period the ancestral long-necked pheasants spread throughout Europe, starting in the southeast but then following the advance of the forests northward until they were spread over most of the area. They were rarer after the establishment of farming and retreated to the wilderness areas. By the time of the Roman Empire, they had been extirpated around the Mediterranean and the common (ring-necked) pheasants began to be imported from Russia (Scythia) to replace them[indicated by darkest grey on the map]By the Dark Ages they had disappeared in Central Europe and whereas before there were several different colour schemes for the

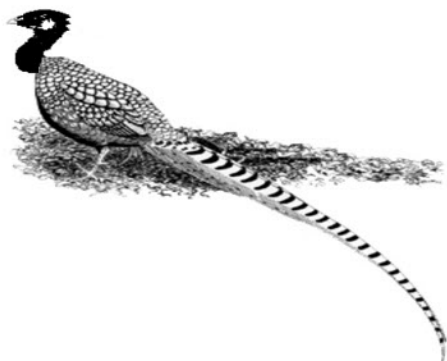


males, in the later Middle Ages and on there were commonly on the green phase in Western Europe and the red phase in Eastern Europe. They would have died out much sooner except they had become associated with a superstitious dread that made people keep away from them. Reports became spotty in recent years but they were seen sporadically in the 1800s and possibly early 1900s. in England and Wales on the one hand, and in the Baltic countries on the other.



I have a contemporary report of “Venomous Flying Snakes” from Novgorod in Russia at the Yahoo group Frontiers-of-Zoology, and I now believe that report to belong in this category. Recent reports also seem to come from the Basque territories in Southern France and Northern Spain.”

The images below and on the previous page appeared in Dale’s original blog.



THE
Flying Serpent,
OR
Strange News out of
E S S E X
BEING

A true Relation of a Mounstrous Serpent which hath
divers times been seen at a Parish called *Illesham-on-the-Moore*
within four miles of *Saffron Walden*.

Showing the length, proportion, and bigness of
the Serpent, the place where it commonly lurks and what
means hath been used to kill it.

Also a discourse of other Serpents and particularly
of a Cockatrice killed at *Saffron Walden*.

The truth of this Relation of the Serpent is attested.

{	<i>Richard Tasson</i> . . . Church-Warden.	}
{	<i>Thomas Probert</i> . . . Constable.	}
{	<i>John Knight</i> . . . Overseer for the Poor.	}

By

{	<i>Barnaby Thurgood,</i> <i>Samuel Garret,</i> <i>Richard Bory,</i> <i>William Green,</i>	}
Householders.		

WITH AN ADVICE.
LONDON, Printed at A Shop by Peter Liden in *Chancery-lane*.
[1669]

HAPPON WALDEN.
Re-produced in facsimile by W. MASTLAND.
With Introduction by ROBT. MEIER CHRISTY.
1985.
Price Six-pence.



There were six comments;

Retrieverman said....

Does the CFZ still have the pair of Reeve's pheasants?

Ego Ronanus said...

Unfortunately, bits of this interesting article have been cut at the edges. Could a re-edited version be managed, as it certainly must rank as a diligent piece of research.

Dr Karl Shuker said...

Although intriguing, Dale's suggestion that the Welsh feathered snakes were cock pheasants is far from new. Way back in 1995, within my book 'Dragons: A Natural History', I noted: "It has been suggested that brightly coloured serpents with feathered wings spied in the vale of Edeyrnion in 1812 may have been cock pheasants, which were unfamiliar there.". However, I still find it difficult to believe that a pheasant could be mistaken for a flying snake - unless the latter term had a much wider meaning, such as 'flying dragon'.

Oll Lewis said...

The Gwibers possibly being pheasants or similar birds rather than snakes has always been one of my preferred explanations, like with all widespread cryptozoological reports though there are likely to be a variety of explanations, different in each case. For example Ned of Glamorgan forged a lot of folklore generally regarded as authentic by many even to this day among these were some tales of Gwibers



We have a male Reeves pheasant still at the CFZ

In the last picture Dale used it is interesting to note, how similar the firebird looks to the Chinese Fenghuang which is also based on a pheasant.

Dale Drinnon said....

Thank you all for your comments. I was unaware that a pheasant-like bird had been suggested as a solution to this mystery but this is also an explanation I have had for quite some time and only just now elaborated upon. Indeed my oldest notes with this suggestion as regards Wyverns and Cockatrices go back to the 1970s.

In specific reply to Karl's remarks, the Anhinga is frequently spoken of as "A Flying Snake" by inexperienced observers and that is mainly ONLY for the long neck. I had thought to make the neck longer on my reconstruction but on the balance with the depictions I had on hand, I made it somewhat shorter in my reconstruction than I would have liked. The "Serpent" part comes mainly from the very long tail and the flight profile which makes it look as if it were all one elongated mass with wings added. And the part about both the head and the tail "coiling up" is explained in the entry: one of the photos shows the pheasant's tail "Coiling"

This is now my preferred explanatin for the Western, European Flying dragons and I prefer it over Pterosaurs and the like. The fourlegged kinds are a much more recent addition and Water dragons are are a separate category again.

Best Wishes, Dale D.

AnnF said...

Very clever idea, whether new or not! Ring-necked, at least, can move explosively quickly, so much that it could seem like a snake striking. If other birds have the habit of lying low and then bursting out unexpectedly, this snake-like behaviour would be more "evidence" that this thing is a snake.



FIGURES

Top left to bottom right going anti-clockwise. Page 13

1. Reeve's Pheasant tail curling up Snakelike
2. Reeve's Pheasant Original Range (below the pheasant)
3. 'Flying Viper' Pheasant Hypothetical Original range, Biome similar to Reeve's Pheasant in China. Showing Eradications in Central area in early Historical period and Persisting in the Fringelands

4-7 Top left to bottom left going clockwise: Page 14.

4. "Flying Serpent" Longnecked Pheasant Mockup for Possible Appearance in Life

5. "Flying Serpent" Pheasant to Scale to Human, Size as Commonly Reported

6. "Guivre" Image

7. The Flying Serpent or Strange News out of Essex



The Quest for The Red Heifer

Zvi Ron

One of the more esoteric rituals described in the Bible is that of the red heifer (Num.19). The ashes produced from burning a red heifer were used as part of the purification process for people who came into contact with a dead body. Paradoxically, those who burn the cow and collect the ashes themselves contract a low level of impurity. The ashes were mixed with water and sprinkled on the impure person on the third and seventh day of the purification process. Purity was considered very important in ancient times, since it is prohibited to enter the Temple in a state of impurity. Even in modern times, according to Jewish law it is prohibited to enter the area where the Temple once stood in a state of impurity. It is for this reason that traditionally Jews pray at the Western Wall, just outside the area where the Temple stood.

The rules for the red heifer are very precise. The cow must be completely red (actually more like a ruddy brown color), (1) meaning that it does not have two hairs of any other color near each other or three non-red hairs anywhere on its body.(2) The cow must be at least three years old, have no physical blemishes, and must never have been used for labor. (3) Such conditions made the appearance of a proper red heifer very rare and in fact according to rabbinic tradition, throughout Jewish history only seven or nine were ever prepared. The most recent was prepared by the High Priest Ishmael ben Phiabi in the first century CE, shortly before the destruction of the Second Temple at the hands of the Romans.(4)

The red heifer ritual is generally considered the most mysterious rite in the Bible, an ordinance whose exact reasons are unfathomable. Rabbinic tradition teaches that even King Solomon, wisest of all men, was baffled by this ritual.(5) The early rabbis taught that this ritual was in some way atonement for the sin of the Golden Calf. (6) Some modern Bible scholars suggest that the idea of using a red cow for a purification offering has to do with the association of the color red with blood, thus symbolically increasing the amount of blood in the ashes. This would also explain the crimson yarn and reddish cedar wood that was burned along with the cow. (7) The main reason that the red heifer is discussed in contemporary news reports every so often is based on a tradition recorded by the medieval Jewish sage Maimonides. He writes that the tenth red heifer will be prepared by the Messiah.(8)



The ashes of the red heifer will then be used to purify people as part of the process of restoring the Temple service. It is because of this that the red heifer has taken on eschatological significance, its appearance understood as heralding Messianic times. It is for this reason that some people today search for the red heifer, even working to breed them.(9)

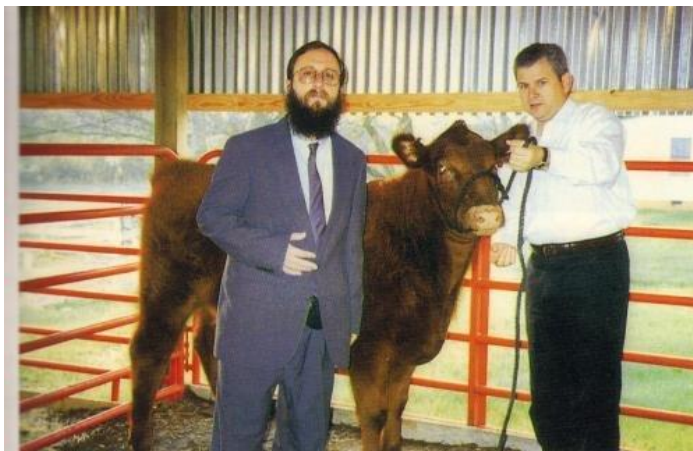


Fig 1

The Red
Heifer

The most recent attempts at finding a red heifer appropriate for ritual use include Rabbi Mordechai Shmaryahu of Kfar Chassidim in Israel, who in 1997 owned a newborn heifer named Melody that was originally declared a potentially kosher red heifer, but later some white hairs were found on her tail. When this red calf was first discovered, many were concerned that this would trigger some kind of activity to build the Temple in Jerusalem and upset the delicate balance among the various religious groups in Israel. Rabbi Shmaryahu himself demurred, saying, “The whole thing has been blown way out of proportion.” (10)

The Temple Institute in Jerusalem, founded in 1987, is dedicated to rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. Most of their efforts centre on producing educational materials, raising public awareness about the Temple and constructing vessels and priestly garments for use in the future Temple. They run a small museum in the Old City of Jerusalem which is very popular with Christian tourists. (11) Over the years, rabbis of the Temple Institute have tried various ways of producing a kosher red heifer. One plan was to import frozen fetuses of a red heifer from a Scandinavian country and implant them in the uterus of an Israeli cow (12). Since the early 1990s Rabbis from the institute have been working with Clyde Lott, a Mississippi cattle rancher and Pentecostal preacher, to breed a red heifer based on Lott's Red Angus cattle. Like many Evangelical Christians, Lott hopes that the red heifer will herald the beginning of the End-Times. This activity has once again raised some concerns that it may be part of extremist efforts to destroy the mosque



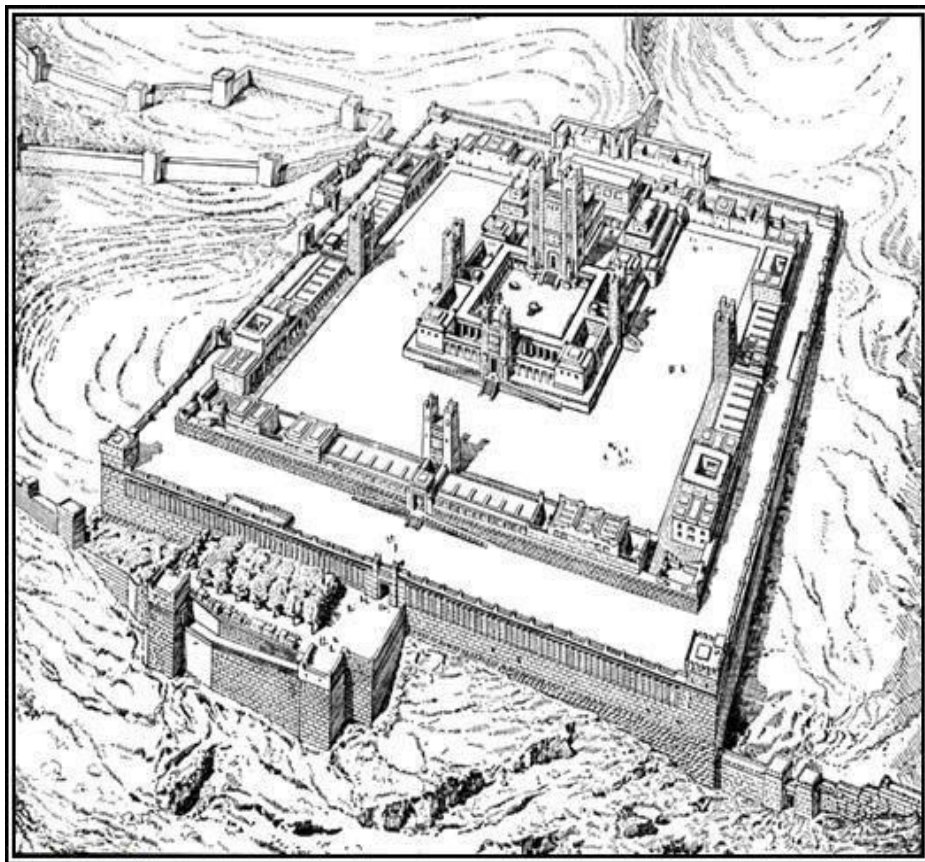


Fig 2 The Third Temple as outlined in Ezekiel chs. 40-47 Wikipedia Creative Commons. Incorrectly labelled Second Temple in Wikipedia.

currently on the Temple Mount as part of an effort to rebuild the Temple. The rabbis from the Temple Institute caution that they have no intention to immediately begin purifying people in preparation for the building of the Temple in Jerusalem.(13)

Periodically, reports appear in the news about a red heifer being born. Already, calves born through Lott's efforts have been declared candidates for a kosher red heifer.(14) One was born in 2002 in Israel, but not much has been reported about it since. (15) Because of the requirement that the cow must be at least three years old for ritual use, in many potential red heifers white hairs develop later, disqualifying the calf.



Rabbis from the Temple Institute explain that nowadays a red heifer is not that rare. (16) Herds of red cows are found in Holland and Texas, and recently the genetic code for red heifers has been cracked. (17) At this point the main problem is not finding an unblemished red heifer, these may exist already, and if not they will shortly. The main issue now is that the ashes of a red heifer can only be prepared by a priest who is himself ritually pure. However, the only way to be purified is through the ashes of the red heifer, resulting in a Catch-22. In Temple times, some ashes of previous red heifer were set aside and used to purify the priest who would prepare the ashes of the new red heifer so there was a solution to this problem. Until a mechanism is found to purify a priest who will prepare the ashes, the red heifer has no practical ritual use. In any event, as Rabbi Richman from the Temple Institute says, “Many things have to happen before the Temple can be built, the main one being that we must have unity in Israel before it can happen, which we don’t have now. The Temple is supposed to be for everyone, not just Jews. It’s really universal in scope.” (18)

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9. See my last article on the red heifer, “ Watch Out for Red Heifer Madness,” INFO Journal 78, Autumn 1997,p.23
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The image on p 17 of the red heifer is from The Temple Institute web site.



The Pine Marten in Derbyshire 1996-2011

Richard Muirhead

According to 'Evidence of Pine Martens in England and Wales 1996-2007: Analysis of Reported Sightings and Foundations for the Future' J Birks and J Messenger (2010) : " Of the period 1977-1982 *they* note: [Strachan et al-Ed.] "the number of records for the population of South Yorkshire/Derbyshire dwindled rapidly.....,with little evidence of presence from West Yorkshire. There may have been some emigration southwards into South Yorkshire or the the High Peak area of Derbyshire. " (1) Subsequently (1983-1988), they suggest of this population: the paucity of records indicate that it may now consist of very few animals. (2)

VC 57 [Vice County 57-Derby-Ed] records are temporally concentrated in the 1990s, and geographically clustered in the centre of this VC in the wooded valleys between Bakewell and Belper (where SK35 is a hotspot hectad.) In 1996 a pine marten was seen 5m up a larch tree in Hall Dale Woods (SK2863), and another among rocks in Lea Wood near Holloway (SK3156); In 1997 (a year that produced six records from this VC) a pine marten was seen to run up a tree near Wirksworth (SK3254), one was watched for several minutes eating berries in a hawthorn bush at Crich (SK3454) and one was seen on top of a wall and then running up a tree at Wheatcroft (SK3557) And in 1998 a pine marten was described as 'shooting up a tree in the Goyt Valley (SK0173); in 2002 one was seen 7m up a tree at Chellaston (SK32); In 2003 one was seen feeding on nuts up in trees and bushes Holloway (SK3156); and in 2005 a pine marten was seen moving from bough to bough > 20m up a tree near Eckington. (SK4179). Just before the publication of this report, a 2001 record of a pine marten killed accidentally during predator control in SK37.....came to light via Steve Docker of the Derbyshire Mammal Group. Photographs of the preserved specimen confirmed its identity, and we await a tissue sample to establish its haplotype.(3)



The Derbyshire Times of February 6th 1997 wrote: “Derbyshire naturalists are jubilant after the welcome return of one of Britain’s rare elusive mammals- the pine marten. A sighting between Matlock and Belper, at a location which is being kept secret, could be the first in the county for more than ten years. Nick Moyes, who runs the Derbyshire Biological Records Centre at Derby’s City Museum, said: “The animal was clearly observed for more than 15 minutes by naturalists who saw it feeding on berries high up in the branches of an overgrown hawthorn hedgerow.” (4)

“The abundance of reports from the well-populated Derwent Valley over the period 1996-1999 is remarkable (with only four subsequent records). Some of these involved daytime sightings of animals close to human habitation, leading to suggestions that a release or escape from captivity may have occurred. The very heavy visitor pressure in the Peak District National Park (10 million visitors per year; ANPA, 2009) would tend to ensure a reasonable recording effort within its bounds, so the paucity of records from the new millennium may reflect a decline in abundance” (5).

There were 25 records in the 1996-2007 period.

This VC produced two sightings of > 1 pine marten: in September 1996 two animals were seen together by a farmer herding cows near Riber near Matlock (SK3158); and in September 1996 three young animals were seen together on a road at night near Bradbourne. (SK2152) (6)

In April 2011 I sent a letter to the Buxton Advertiser on a purely speculative basis asking if anyone had observed pine martens in Derbyshire. I received two interesting replies. Mr Roger Leaning saw a dead one in the Summer of 2010 between the roundabout near the village of Baslow and the Robin Hood pub. This is a wooded area near Chatsworth House estate, with moorland. I contacted Chatsworth House in May 2011 to ask if the gamekeeper there had any reports of pine martens in their grounds but received the following reply: “Thank you for your email and I am sorry that you did not receive a reply to your earlier email. I am afraid that we do not have any records of sightings of pine martens in the Chatsworth area” (7)

One of the sightings was by a Mr Pete Yeomans:

“One of the last Victorian railways to be opened has been a favourite walk of mine for many years. I am talking about the Tissington Trail and I walk sections of it quite regularly. One frosty morning in March 2008 I was walking from Parsley Hay to the old preserved Hartington signal box with intentions of



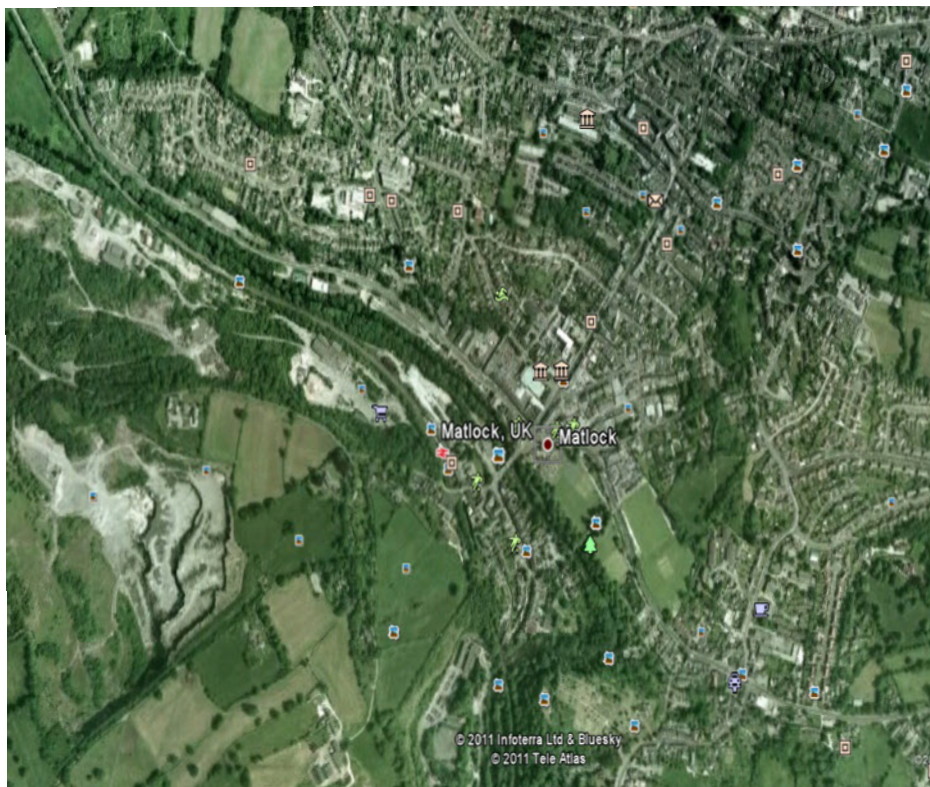


Fig 1 Matlock area by Google Earth

returning to Parsley Hay and enjoying a four mile walk, me and the dogs. On crossing over the bridge that covers the road from the A515 Ashbourne road to Hartington (time about 8am), I spotted what at first I thought was a cat standing in the middle of the trail (roughly 4 yards from the bridge wall on the right hand side in the attached photo). It was staring at my two border collies and they likewise, staying long enough for me to get a good sighting of its markings. Not really 100% sure at the time what I had seen I checked on getting home and there it was on the good old PC a pine marten. Quite a sighting I was told later, an animal that is alleged to be extinct in this country. The one sighted disappeared quickly down the banking into the rough (on the right hand side of the photo), and I never saw it on my return from the signal box or ever again since, but I now keep an eye open when I am down any part of the White Peak Trails as you never know! Pete Yeomans (8) See Fig 2 on page 24 for location of this sighting.





Fig 2 Location of the March 2008 sighting.

Mr Yeomans also sighted a pine marten in February 2011. Here is his account sent to me in the form of another e-mail:“ Sighting of the elusive pine marten comes three years later in February 2011. Again down the old Victorian Tissington Trail, this time my walk was Hurdlow to Friden and return and on approaching a copse situated on the left side of the trail on a gradual left hand bend , between Cotesfield Farm and Parsley Hay I spotted what I now know was a Pine Marten. The photo is taken looking towards Cotesfield and the Pine Marten was on the right of the trail and on hearing or seeing me ran off to the right and over the wall and into what looks like a gully and thin copse never to be seen again. Lucky sightings or what from an animal rarer than a U.F.O. ? “(9) Pete Yeomans.





Fig 3 Location of the February 2011 sighting.

The Derbyshire Mammal Group News Spring 2011 issue contained this report:

Out with the old and in with the new? Genetic evidence of differing origins and fates of pine marten populations across the British Isles.

The Mammal Society Easter Conference April 2011

Neil R.Jordan, John Messenger, Peter Turner, Johnny Birks, Elizabeth Crosse, Catherine O'Reilly.

Question: Are relic pine marten populations still present in England and Wales?



“We investigated the origins and persistence of European pine marten (*Martes martes*) populations in the British Isles using mitochondrial DNA. Haplotypes of contemporary and historical marten populations from the same areas (Ireland and southern Britain respectively) differed. While Irish and southern British stock appear to have a common origin, the recent history of these populations differs. Genetic results from Ireland suggest that contemporary Irish pine martens are descended from a relict population which passed through an early 1900s bottleneck, while in southern Britain current data suggests a significant change in the population’s genetic composition. In England and Wales, the apparently sole historical haplotype (I) has been replaced (since 1950) by a contemporary population consisting predominantly of individuals of haplotype A (currently also found in Scotland). This, and the occasional occurrence of haplotypes origination from continental Europe and others suggesting introgression with *M. americana*, suggest that the relict populations of England and Wales have been replaced or at least infiltrated by occasional released, escaped and/or translocated animals.”(10)

Pine martens are alleged to have held out in the Derwent Valley until the 1970s. (11) .According to the Wild About Britain Forum in a posting by Ladywell on April 25th 2011 “ For years there have been rumours of their [pine martens] existence in the Ladybower and Derwent woods but as far as I know, still nothing concrete as yet. Personally,I think it unlikely, but would love to be proved wrong. Someone in the Peak District once claimed they saw a giant slug as well, as big as a car and it might just be the same person who saw a pine marten.(12) Another contributor on April 27th reported a sighting above Stalybridge: “ My brother was 90% sure he saw one in Snake woodlands about 2 years ago reported it to Vincent Trust.”(13)

I have notes from the Victoria County History of Derbyshire vol 1(1905) on the occurrence of the pine marten in Derbyshire in the 19th century which I can pass on to any reader for free if you interested. Just give me your e-mail address.



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- 8 E-mail from Pete Yeomans to R. Muirhead April 29th 2011
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- 10 Anon Derbyshire Mammal Group News Spring 2011 p 1
- 11 P.Hobson The lost animals of Derbyshire. Derbyshire Life and Countryside vol 69 no. 12 December 2004 p.75
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13. Posting by JB3902 on Wild About Britain Forum April 27th 2011



The Weird Weird World of Worm Anomalies

Richard Muirhead

Job ch 25 vs 5-6: “Behold, even the moon has no brightness (compared to God’s glory) and the stars are not pure in His sight. How much less a man, who is a maggot! And a son of man, who is a worm!”

This essay does not pretend to be an exhaustive coverage of worm anomalies, just some highlights I found interesting. For a creature as humble as a worm, there is a fairly significant quantity of unusual data. One of my earliest pieces of reading material was about Lowly Worm and his chums in the Richard Scarry books I read as a child in Hong Kong. My Dad found me playing with a “family of worms” once, this was also in Hong Kong. So I decided to gather together the following stories which are arranged roughly in date order. This first selection relates to worm distribution in the Sahara and beyond from ‘Sahara: The Life of the Great Desert’. (2004)

“Desirable as they are, earthworms are also vulnerable creatures. They are extremely sensitive to the loss of body water, and will die within hours if exposed to the air, particularly aquatic species. Yet earthworms exist in all the damp places of the Sahara, and aquatic worms in oases a very long way from places where rain commonly falls or rivers commonly run - in Tin Téhoun, for example. Tin Téhoun is a small hamlet, not much more than a few ramshackle houses and the well, shabby and down-at-the-heels. Even the palms look dispirited, poor cousins to the robust groves of the northern oases. The nearest occasional water, the Niger River floodplain, is at least fifty miles away to the south. To the north, sixty or seventy miles away, is another hamlet not much different. Maybe two hundred miles to the north-east is the drainage basin around the Timétrine Mountain, a flattened adjunct of the Adrar des Iforhas, but the drainage basin hasn’t actually drained anything for millenia, and is as arid as the surrounding desert. Yet here are earthworms, as slimy and glossy as ever.



How did they get here? Where from? Why here? How long ago? Did they migrate here, in different times, or are they retreating? Were they always here, and are they now cut off from their “cousins” elsewhere? And if they did arrive in the deep desert in earlier epochs, when? In any case, their “migration routes” shed some light on geological events and on the history of human interaction with the Sahara, as an Egyptian team thought when they began an esoteric and unlikely study of deep-desert earthworms.

The Egyptian Study, by S.I. Ghabbour of Cairo University’s Institute of African Research and Studies, had become interested in genus, and then in species. Earthworms may look alike, but different parts of the Sahara are inhabited by different species, with some curious connections.. The worms of the north-west-Western Sahara, Morocco, parts of Algeria, even the offshore Canary islands-are identical to those in Spain and Portugal. Species found in eastern Algeria, the Tripoli area of Libya, and as far east as Siwa in Egypt are similar to those found in Sardinia and Sicily.

The worms of eastern Nile region can also be found in the Levant and as far north as Romania. The earthworms of the southern Sahara live along four distant tracks. The first follows the Blue Nile north from the Ethiopian Plateau; the second starts in Kenya and ends at the Siwa oasis in northern Egypt; the third starts near Africa’s Great Lakes, especially around Lake Victoria, passes through Sudan, and finishes in Tunisia; the fourth, most curious of all, is a long and sinuous trail that starts in West Africa, in Liberia and follows the southern Sahara all the way to the Nile and thence north to Lake Dahshour, near Cairo, a distance of more than three thousand miles.

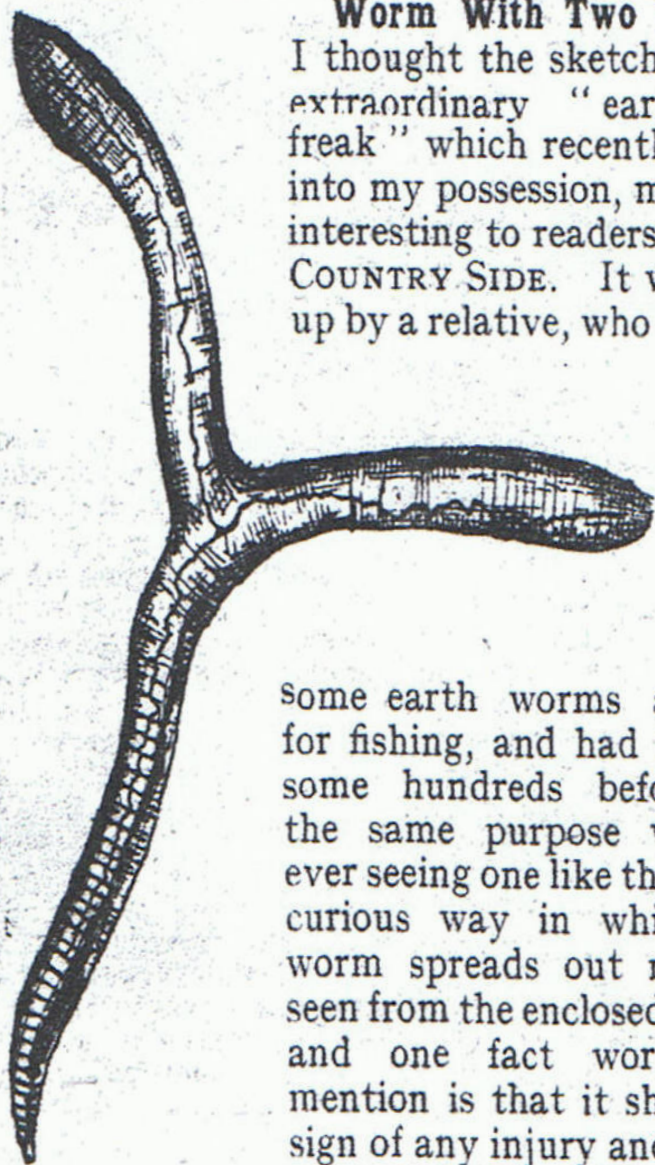
The migration patterns, if that’s what they are, of the Saharan earthworms in some ways confuse as much as enlighten. But their widespread dispersal in the desert is clear and unambiguous evidence that the Sahara was once a great deal more humid than it is now, at some or many times in the distant past. The earthworms aren’t by any means the only evidence, but they are conclusive. The earthworms didn’t hitch a ride on a camel; they came on their own, through soil that was moist and nutritious, and were trapped in the few places where moisture remains.”(1)

Fig 1 Page 30. A very odd worm from The Country-side Monthly September 1910 vol 1 no. 4 page 166.



Worm With Two Tails.—

I thought the sketch of this extraordinary "earthworm freak" which recently came into my possession, might be interesting to readers of THE COUNTRY SIDE. It was dug up by a relative, who wanted



some earth worms as bait for fishing, and had dug up some hundreds before for the same purpose without ever seeing one like this. The curious way in which the worm spreads out may be seen from the enclosed sketch and one fact worthy of mention is that it shows no sign of any injury and is still being kept alive. The sketch

is natural size.—A. DOROTHY DAFFON, Cirencester.

[Similar freaks are not unknown, but are of very rare occurrence.—E. K. R.]



The Countryman magazine for Summer 1993 contained the following contribution from Don Chapman of Harlow,Essex:

THE NIGHT THE WORMS DANCED. It was 2am on a warm,summer night,very humid with the heaviest dew I can recall. There was a full moon in a clear sky. Drawn by the brilliant light outside, I got out of bed, opened the window and looked onto the lawn. It was covered by hundreds, thousands even of very large worms spaced out evenly all over its 20 square yards,each worm aligned towards the moon which was high in the southern sky. I went out and walked among them. As I approached, the nearer ones withdrew at the last moment in a smooth, unhurried fashion and I realised that although each lay easily nine inches along the ground,it had its tail end inside the hole it had appeared from, giving purchase on the sides and enabling rapid withdrawal. Those farthest away remained as they were, saturated in dew and moonlight as if basking. I got up again later in the night and looked out again to find the worms still aligned to the moon which had now moved round about 30 degrees. Like so many moondials, they pointed in unison at the moon. They have no sight, so how could they have known where was? This event has remained in my memory for 20 years, I have never seen it repeated nor heard of it elsewhere-*Don Chapman,Harlow,Essex*

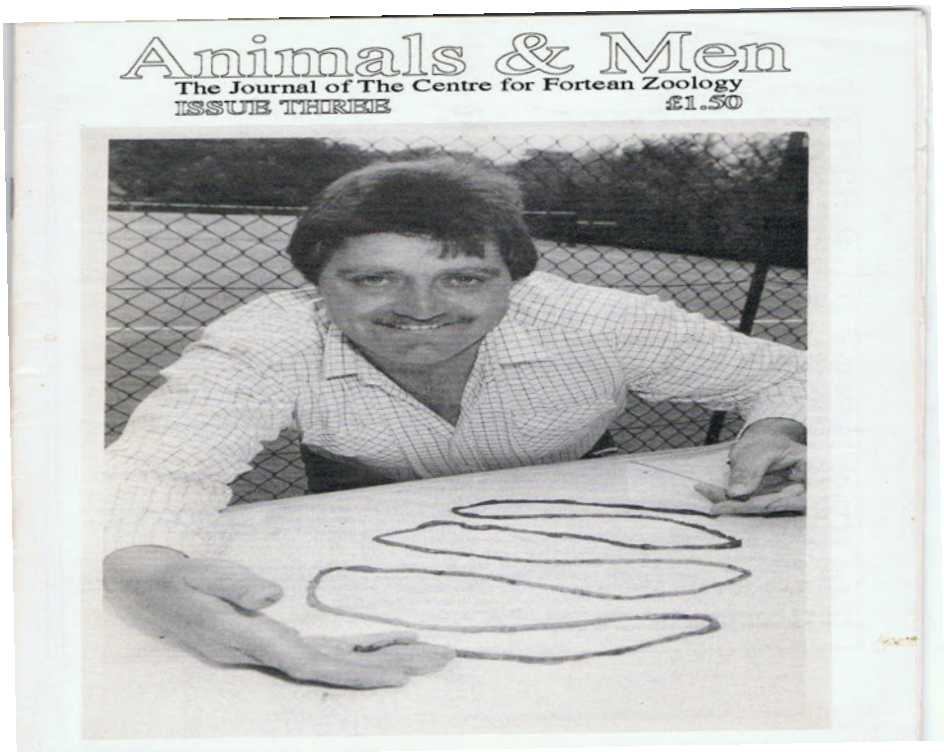
Fig 2 Earthworm Wikipedia Creative Commons



[Earthworms do have light-sensitive cells. They recoil from strong light but are attracted to weak light, which perhaps explains apparent orientation to the moon. Over 150 years ago, Gilbert White described other aspects in *The Natural History of Selborne*: 'When earthworms lie out a-nights on the turf, though they extend their bodies a great way, they do not quite leave their holes, but keep the ends of their tails fixed therein, so that on least alarm they can retire with precipitation under the earth. Whatever food falls within their reach when thus extended, they seem to be content with, such as blades of grass, straws, fallen leaves, the ends of which they often draw into their holes....' - E.D.] (2)

I also have a worm story from Mars from Fortean Times 139 (October 2000) pp 24-25. This article is 'Mars Special: Water, Water, Everywhere' in which reports are made of worm-like structures on Mars. "Skipper's own interpretation of the 'worm-like tubes is quite extreme he concludes that they might be "organic constructs" that capture and retain water and may still be functioning. "(3) Skipper and fellow Mars watcher Jeffrey McCann now have their own website marsanomalyresearch.com to publish their discoveries.

Fig 3 Animals and Men 3 1994 showing very long worm. Reproduced with permission of Eastbourne Gazette and Jon Downes.



The account of the giant worm on the previous page in *Animals and Men* 3 said: “Although the creature was of local interest as a ‘freak’ it was not a record holder (the British record Earthworm was 13 feet in length and the world record is held by a South American 33 footer) after being photographed this 20th century descendant of ‘Oroboros the Midgard Serpent’ was consigned ignominiously to the rubbish skip!” (4)

Charles Fort obviously had something to say about worms, as follows:

“That, June 24, 1911, at Eton, Bucks, England, the ground was found covered with masses of jelly, the size of peas, after a heavy rainfall. We are not told of nostoc, this time: it is said that the object contained numerous eggs of “some species of Chironomus, from which larvae soon emerged.”

“I incline, then, to think that the objects that fell at Bath were neither jellyfish nor masses of frog spawn, but something of a larval kind- This is what happened in Bath, England, 23 years before. *London Times*, April 24, 1871: That, upon the 22nd of April, 1871, a storm of glutinous drops neither jellyfish nor masses of frogspawn, but something of a [line missing here in original text. Ed.] railroad station, at Bath. “Many soon developed into a wormlike chrysalis, about an inch in length.” The account of this occurrence in the *Zoologist*, 2-6-2686, is more like the Eton-datum; of minute forms, said to have been infusoria; not forms about an inch in length.” (5).....In *Timbs Year Book*, 1877-26, it is said that, in the winter of 1876, at Christiana, Norway, worms were found crawling upon the ground. The occurrence is considered a great mystery, because the worms could not have come up from the ground, inasmuch as the ground was frozen at the time, and because they were reported from other places, also, in Norway.....Large number of worms found in a snowstorm, upon the surface of snow about four inches thick, near Sangerfield, NY Nov 18, 1850 (*Scientific American*, 6-96) . The writer thinks that the worms had been brought to the surface of the ground by rain, which had fallen previously” (6)

New Orleans Daily Picayune, Feb. 14, 1892-enormous numbers of unknown brown worms that had fallen from the sky, near Clifton, Indiana. *San Francisco Chronicle*, Feb. 14, 1892-myriads of unknown scarlet worms-somewhere in Massachusetts-not seen to fall from the sky, but found, covering several acres, after a snowstorm. It is as if with intelligence, or with the equivalence of intelligence, something has specialized upon transporting, or distributing, immature and larval forms of life. If the gods send worms, that would be kind if we were robins. (7)



On April 29th 2010 The Metro newspaper reported:

Unearthed: Worm not seen for last 20 years

“An earthworm that has achieved near-mythic status in the U.S. Has been found alive. An adult and juvenile giant Palouse earthworm were found after scientists used a probe that sends electric shocks into the ground, forcing them to surface. It is the first time in 20 years that two live specimens have been found. The worm- the latest example of which measures 30cm (12in) - was first reported to the scientific world in 1897 but largely disappeared from the Palouse region of Washington and Idaho for nearly a century. Some experts blamed agricultural development. The latest pair were found by Idaho University researchers who dispelled two bizarre myths that surround the creatures: no, they did not spit and they did not smell of lilies. The two were found last month but were later identified as the elusive species. Three cocoons were also found, two of which have hatched.”(8)

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RANDOM
DEVO IMAGE!



Some Odd Fauna Records in Britain 1611-1922

Richard Muirhead

John Speed's '**Theatre of the Empire of Great Britaine**' was first published in 1611 so it seems appropriate to start with that year in this study. This was a kind of atlas with notes about each county. For the Whitby area of Yorkshire Speed states: "Places of memorable note are *Whitby*, where are found certaine stones fashioned like Serpents, foulded and wrapped round in a wreath, even the very pass times of Nature, who shee is wearied with serious workes, sometimes forgeth and shapeth things by way of sport and recreation: so that by the credulous they are thought to have beene Serpents, which a coate of crust of stones had now covered all over, and by the praiers of *S.Hilda* turned to stone: And also there are certaine fields here adjoining, where Geese flying over fall downe sodainlie to the ground, to the great admiration of all men: But such as are not given to superstitious credulitie, may attribute this unto a secret propriety of this ground, and a hidden dissent betwixt this Soile and these Geese, as the like is between Wolves and the Squilla rootes. At *Skengraue* (a little village) some seventie yeeres since, was caught a fish called a Sea-man, that for certaine daieres together fedde on raw fishes, but espying his opportunitie escaped againe into his waterie Element....At *Huntly Nabo*, are stones found at the rootes of certaine rockes, of divers bignesse, so artificially shaped round by nature, in maner of a Globe, as if they had beene made by the Turners hand. In which (if you breake them) are found stony Serpents, enwrapped round like a wreath, but most of them headlesse"(1)

"In England the folklore of snakestones is centred mainly around Whitby in Yorkshire and Keynsham in Somerset. From near Whitby William Camden (1551-1623) in his *Britannia* of 1586 recorded stones which 'if you break them you find within stony serpents, wreathed up in circles, but generally without heads'. Legend supposes that the fossils were once living serpents which were common in the area until the 7th Century A.D when Saxon abbess St Hilda (614-680) turned them into stone in order to clear a site for the building of her convent. The heads of the serpents were assumed to have been destroyed on their death.

This legend has passed into English literature as illustrated by the following passage from a poem by Surtees:

"Then sole amid the serpent tribe, The holy Abbess stood,



With fervent faith and uplift hands
Grasping the holy rood.
The suppliant's prayer and powerful charm
Th'unnumbered reptiles own;
Each falling from the cliff, becomes
A headless coil of stone "(2).

A similar passage from Sir Walter Scott's *Marmion* describes the same tale:

"When Whitby's nuns exalting told,
Of thousand snakes each one
Was changed into a coil of stone,
When holy Hilda pray'd;
Themselves, within their holy ground,
Their stony folds had often found".(3)

The absence of heads in the Whitby snake stones is sometimes attributed to a further curse by St. Cuthbert, another saint from northern England. In order to perpetuate the legend and to effect sales of specimens, local collectors and dealers in fossils frequently 'restored' the snake stones by carving heads on them. Many of the Whitby fossils were preserved in jet, which when carved and polished could make beautiful ornaments; the Vikings imported jet from Whitby, and at least one carving of an animal resembling a snake stone is known from Norway, while in Elizabethan England snake stone brooches of jet were highly prized." (4) The front cover of FS 2 shows a snake stone- a fossil ammonite.

There is a story, possibly quite ancient of "a dry land grampus, living in a yew tree", whatever that may be, at a village near Highclere in Hampshire, in John Edgar Mann's **Hampshire Customs, Curiosities and Country Lore**. Now a grampus is a "a killer whale or other cetacean of the dolphin family." (5) so what one was doing in a yew tree in Hampshire I do not know, perhaps the original eye witness was on some sort of hallucinogenic drug?! Moreover, "the vicar, with bell, book and candle, managed to banish [it] to the Red Sea for a



thousand years.....(6) So if you are reading this now and the 1000 years are up and you look out of the window at that yew tree, take care! Seriously- Richard Freeman has said: “ Once Nile crocodiles ranged as far north as Turkey. There is even a river called the Crocodile River in Turkey. I don’t know if they were as far north as the Red Sea though.I heard of a case in Africa where a croc bit a chunk out of a diver’s hip. The guy got away and climbed a tree and the croc clambered 3 metres into a tree after him. That’s the only account I can recall.”(7)So it’s unlikely but not impossible that this cryptid was a crocodile and there is no river in Highclere itself. Although ‘Highclere’ itself means ‘ bright river.’ The nearest river is the Endbourne in between Highclere and Newbury. Perhaps on one occasion there was a flood that washed a cetacean into the branches of a yew tree? Perhaps it was a kind of giant slug? Ron Snipp of Highclere History Group wrote to me: “ A couple of lines regarding the Highclere Grampus are below - of course we have heard of this story but are not sure when it will be free to return - those of us who visit the church, live in trepidation and hope that this act was at the old church that originally stood in the Castle grounds! “(8) Also, this information from the **Highclere Village History Group** web site of February 26th 2001: ‘The Highclere Grampus - anything known? :

A web site specialising in dragons tells us that our village is home to ‘The Highclere Grampus.’

“A grampus being a word describing a killer whale, which nestled in a yew tree. It was banished into the sea for 1000 years by a parish priest. “

HIGHCLERE Here another beastly legend is based. Near the church at Highclere there is a Yew Tree in which lived a Grampus, which is a beast something like a Dolphin, except that it lives on the land instead of the sea. This beastly creature has the reputation of “blowing like a whale”, which may account for the expression “ puffing like a Grampus”.

The Grampus at Highclere was known to be rather timid and not very fierce, but it occasionally scared the villagers with its noisy breathing, chasing those who referred to it as “snoring”! (9)

“ One of the few printed references to the Grampus was published in 1890, in Andrew Lang’s “ **Life, Letters, Diaries of Sir Stafford Northcote- First Earl of Iddesleigh**.(vol 1 p.220) Northcote, who lived between 1818 and 1887, was a British Conservative politician and lover of tales of the paranormal. He chronicled a short passage about the Grampus - which refers to as a “ Grampus”- in his diary:

“ A few days after autumn he spent in Highclere. His shooting ‘was excerable’,



but he was consoled with an evening of ghost stories. 'Mrs - had the advantage of us in having seen a ghost.' He expected a visit from Grampus, the Highclere boggy, who, it is true, had been laid in the red sea for 100 years, but his time there was now nearly expired."

While this brief account does not contain any new information on the Grampus, what it may help to illuminate is what period of time the beast actually lurked in the yew tree in the Highclere Churchyard.

Northcote indicated that this fiend's banishment lasted merely 100-years - which may be a typo - but most accounts agree that this beast was cast out for no less than millenia. Assuming that the 1000 year exile is accurate, that would place the Grampus's tenure in the yew tree in Hampshire County at somewhere in the order of the late 9th century A.D.(10)



Fig 1 Grampus or Orca

”

Wikipedia Creative Commons



On April 27th 2011 Marco Masseti (see Flying Snake 1) sent me the following information in response to queries about entries in John Fleming's **History of British Animals** (1828). One of my questions was about the "Cypress Cat". Another question was about the Beech Marten in Britain. (see p. 45)

FELIS.Cat. "The spotted variety, termed "Cypress Cat"¹, is noticed by Merret, [Christopher Merret, 1614/15-1695, an English physician and scientist who compiled one of the first lists of the flora, fauna and minerals of Britain, the *Pinex Rerum Naturalium Britannicarum* - see Wikipedia, Richard] who says (Pin.169.) "Enutritur in aedibus nobilium ²." I haven't been able to translate this on any Google translation tool, nor can I find Cypress Cat on a Google search.

¹ I cannot understand why they named this cat as "Cypress Cat". The term may underline the fact that it was an exotic element to the biogeography of the U.K. Like the cypress that is extraneous to the natural vegetation of Great Britain and Ireland. In any case, one might refer this spotted cat to many wild large-medium sized felids of the Old and the New Worlds, such as the cheetah, *Acinonyx jubatus* (Schreber, 1775), the Iberian lynx, *Lynx pardinus* (Temminck, 1827), the African serval, *Leptailurus serval* (Schreber, 1776), several Asian representatives of the genus *Prionailurus* Severtzov, 1858, and/or of the American genus *Leopardulus* Gray, 1842, etc (see also Masseti, 2009)

Masseti M., 2009- Pictorial evidence from medieval Italy of cheetahs and caracels, and their use in hunting. *Archives of natural history*, 36(1) : 37-47

² *It feeds* (or, not literally: "*it is bred*") *in the houses of nobles*. This means that it was regarded as a very precious (and, perhaps exotic) animal!



The early 18th Century has a number of interesting records, this from **The Lancashire Journal** February 5th 1739: “ There was taken of the Hackney River at Mrs Smith’s Preston Ferry, near Clapton, a monstrous Creature of a Fish, which has four Eyes, its Head like a Jack, two Arms like a Child, paw’d like a Bear, Claws like an Eagle, and a Tail like an Eel, a Crown on his Nose, and is six Foot in length “(11)

The following item is from **The Lancashire Journal** of May 29th 1739 in Kent: “We hear from Dover, that some Days ago Mr Kennet a Miller of that Place, caught a Trout weighing three Pounds and three Quarters; but what is very remarkable, it being affirmed for Truth, that he found three Water Rats in its Belly, and a fourth almost digested.”(12)



Fig 2 Brown Trout Wikipedia Creative Commons

The Lancashire Journal for January 21st 1740 reported: “ Last Thursday a pair of very large black Eagles settled on an Island called the Binness, belonging to the Estate of Colonel Smith. They seemed to be about Four Feet high, as they stood on the Ground. The appearance of these Birds which are very rarely seen in this Country, happening to be observ’d the next Day after the Publick Fast for imploring Success on the present War, occasions various Speculations, and is look’d upon as a happy Omen of the Reunion of the Imperial Arms of Germany and Great Britain, in order once more to check the growing Power, and humble the exorbitant Pride of France and Spain”(13)

Andrew Judd a contemporary Macclesfield ornithologist examined these birds and commented as follows: “ I’ve found no record of Eurasian Black Vultures in the UK. The official British bird list held by the British Ornithologists’ Union (B.O.U.) only goes back to 1800. They are in the process of producing a list of earlier species seen in Britain.

The British List is at <http://www.bou.org.uk/thebritishlist/British-List-2010.pdf>

However having looked up the Eurasian Black Vulture (note “ Eurasian”- There is also a species in America known as a Black Vulture) in my bird books and also on Wikipedia there are several things that make this the most likely suspect.

1. They are dark with the adults having pale heads. However the juvenile is totally black.
2. Though they have not been recorded since 1800 their range traditionally covered Portugal, Spain and southern France. Birds from considerably further afield have been recorded in Britain. It is not impossible for a storm to have caused a couple to have landed in Britain or possibly for a juvenile or two to have wandered from their usual grounds. They are not however migratory and most rarities in the UK are from birds that have been blown off course during migration.
3. They are considered to be the largest bird of prey in the world, a good point considering the size of the reported sightings. The length of the bird, considered to be from the tip of it’s tail to the tip of its beak when laid out flat is up to 115cm (45.3 inches). While they would not stand so high it’s close to the four feet the observer estimated making allowances for some error.

So my conclusion is that the sighting was of two juvenile Cinereous Vulture or Eurasian Black Vulture. Latin name is *Aegypius monachus*. “(14)

Fig 3

Eurasian Black
Vulture.
Wikipedia
Commons



In the **Manchester Magazine** June 24th 1740: “ They write from the Country, that an *Insect*, which first made its Appearance in *Norfolk*, of the Caterpillar-kind, with a formidable Pair of Forceps, Harpy Talons, and a blue List a-cross his Belly, has fastened on the Herbage, which it destroys to the very Root: So that in some Parts *Forrage* is like to become as scarce, as if it had been all engrossed for the Use of the *Standing Army*.(15)

Fig 4 on page 44 shows an impression of what this insect might have looked like. Fortunately agricultural records are available for 1740 which indicate the kind of conditions then prevailing, as follows: “ A year of drought, the beginning of a spell of four exceptionally dry years.....It was still cold in July, and the rainfall figures were redeemed largely by a very heavy thunderstorm in late July. Harvest was late and poor, and much fruit failed to ripen. Gilbert White records that fieldfares remained in England till June.....A hurricane occurred in London on November 1st. Jethro Tull died.(16)

On August 14th 1778 **The Belfast News-Letter** had the following intriguing report, one of the earliest accounts of a British crocodile (if indeed that was what it was): “ A few days ago was killed at Coatham, near Kirkleatham, in Cleveland, a very extraordinary monster that resembled a Crocodile. It was seven yards long and was thought by a numerous company, who assembled to see it, to be the most surprising creature ever seen on the coast of England.” (17)

Enquiries at a museum in Kirkleatham in 2010 yielded no information about this “crocodile.”



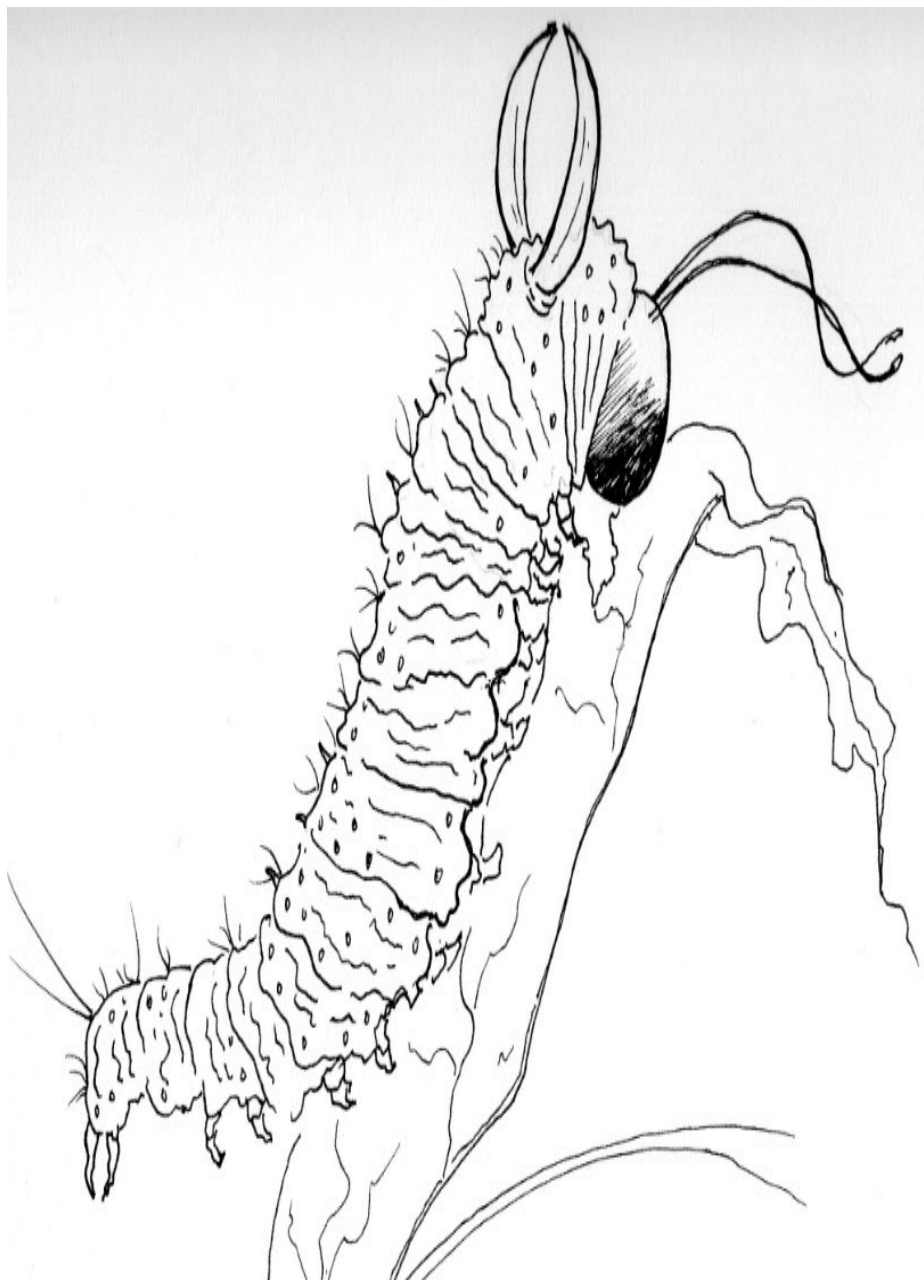


Fig 4 Unknown insect in
Norfolk, 1740, as portrayed by
Mike Hardcastle.



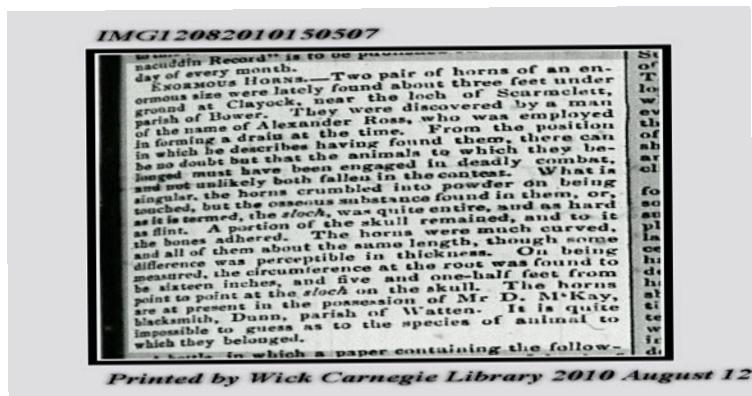
Marco Masseti sent me the following additional information in response to my queries about entries in John Fleming's **History of British Animals**. (1828)

MARTES. "M.fagorum. Common Martin" (i.e The Beech Marten¹) - throat and breast white.....In woods and rocks in the south of England.[possibly confirming Jon Downes's view in **The Smaller Mystery Carnivores of the West Country** (2006) of the presence of the Beech Marten there, but see footnote 1 below.-R]. The length of the body is about 18 inches, the tail 10. The general colour of the fur is dark brown, the head having a reddish tinge- It is a great destroyer of poultry and game. Easily tamed. Lodges frequently in hollows of trees, and brings forth from four to six young." (18)

Note 1 below is completely challenged by Jon Downes research in his book **The Smaller Mystery Carnivores of the West Country** which shows that the Beech Marten and Pine Marten have survived in the S.W of England until relatively recently and indeed may still survive.

Fig 5

Enormous
horns, John
O' Groats
Journal
1840



The Countryman for Summer 1975 includes the following : "I was reminded ...of an entry in the Churchwardens' Accounts for the village of Lythe, near Whitby in North Yorkshire, recording that, in 1846, 8s was paid for 'One jackall head'. For this I have not been able to find an explanation but the high price suggests the animal was an unusual one." (19) For a dog-fox or dog-jackal hybrid in 1907 see p.47.

¹ There are no beech martens or stone martens, *Martes foina* (Erxleben, 1777), in the UK, but only pine marten, *Martes martes* L., 1758. According in fact to Yalden (1999), the evidence from Europe is that the beech marten was a late immigrant to the West: It was possibly a follower of human (Neolithic) groups. Kurtén (1968) observes that it was common in the Near East in the Late Glacial, but was probably absent from western Europe.

The Nottinghamshire Guardian contained the following item about a racoon in Britain, in its May 7th 1857 edition, an animal that has appeared up to the present day: “ A NOVEL FISHER - On Tuesday last, Mr Neilson, fisherman, Auchencairn, on visiting his salmon nets, was suprised to find an animal, to him unknown, busily engaged in devouring fish. On the east coast seals are great pests to the fishermen, but on the shores of the Solway Firth they are unknown; pellocks are common enough, and very destructive to salmon, but, as far as we know, they never come within the dangerous precincts of stake-nets. After a severe struggle, Mr Nelson, aided by his dog, succeeded in destroying the interloper, and sent its carcass off to our ingenious townsman, Mr Hastings, to be stuffed. Mr Hastings at once recognised the animal as a racoon, and undoubtedly it is a very fine specimen of the common racoon (*ursus lbtor* of Linnæus), a native of North America.”- *Dumfries Courier*. (20)

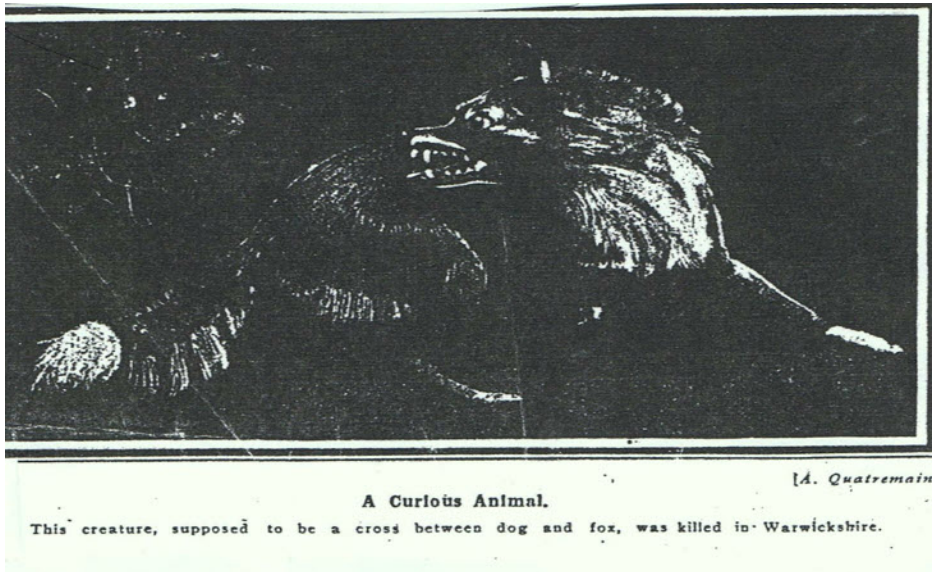
In 1887 the following story relating to giant pike in Market Drayton, Shropshire, appeared in **The Nottinghamshire Guardian**’s Natural History Column for July 16th 1887:

The following is taken from the **Live Stock Journal**, and will no doubt be interesting to our piscatorial readers:- “ As event occurred recently at Market Drayton of so singular a character that, were it not authenticated beyond the shadow of doubt, I should not venture to narrate it. Some months ago the butler at Combermere mysteriously disappeared, and it was generally believed had been drowned in the mere. To solve if possible the mystery of his fate, the services of a diver were secured, who has been busily secured, who has been busily engaged in exploring the depths of the mere. This is a stretch of water between 150 and 200 acres in extent, varying in depth from six to forty feet. It has long been a noted place for pike, and the diver affirms it is positively bristling with them, and that so little did his appearance in their domain affect them, that several have glided so close past him as to brush his legs with their tails in passing. One day, however, when in about eight of water, a monster darted from the shadow of an old tree root, and struck him full in the chest, knocking him on his back, causing him so much pain that he became sick and faint, and had to return to the surface with all speed. He said he believed the fish had taken his arm in its mouth, but it is thought that the fish struck it with its tail, and thus injured it, as no marks of teeth were visible. The diver said, in a long experience both in sea and river, never had he been so assailed before, and he took care to provide further protection for his hands and arms before proceeding with his task. “ (21)



The Country-side reported on December 9th 1905 page 55 an odd coloured frog in N.Wales. The frog was described as having a back of a bright red colour, spotted with orange, and a pure white breast seen swimming in a brook in N.Wales, it was an interesting instance of colour variation of the common frog. On the same page a bright yellow frog in Hull was mentioned.**The Country-side** September 1st 1906 p. 230 Grass snake 2ft long killed in Ballymena, Co. Antrim. The same magazine on September 28th 1907 (p.294) contained the following: Dog-Fox Hybrid?- “ This curious animal, supposed to be a cross between a dog and a fox,was killed some time ago wild, in a wood in Warwickshire. In colour and shape it resembled the fox very much,especially the hind quarters, as will be in the photo, the tail is thick and marked at the tip with white the same as a fox.When killed, it had very much the same scent;in size,not quite so large as a fox.- ARTHUR QUATREMAIN (22)

Fig 6 A dog-fox hybrid Warwickshire 1907



[Terry Hooper wrote to me on August 12th 1997 saying: “ Karl Shuker tells me its more likely a dog-jackal would mate (but,then,my accounts state the jackal owner in one case bred a Jackal vixen with fox?).....It’s curiously fox/jackal headed (more fox?) but collie dog bodied.”(23)]



On July 19th 1912 the following story and photograph appeared in the **Northampton Mercury** featuring a "Tasmanian cat." The animal is of course the Madagascan ring-tailed lemur, so what was one doing near Weedon, Northamptonshire in 1912 and why was it thought to have come from Tasmania?



Fig 7

"Tasmanian
Cat"

The photograph is of a Tasmanian cat found on the line near Weedon, and given by the railway officials in charge of Mr. B. Southgate, of the Horse-shoe Inn, Weedon, until the owner can be found. Mr. Southgate is making use of the opportunity by collecting for the Northampton Hospital.



In 1912 **The Country-side** reported a Green lizard in Lancaster p. 410

Fig 8
Rabbit with
tusks



The headline in this February 1922 edition of **The Surrey Times** reads 'Rabbit With Tusks'. Obviously a sad deformity. The text reads: "The above is a photo of a rabbit killed at Hascombe last week. It will be noted that the lower jaw protruded in front of the other, with the result that two of the teeth grew like tusks and penetrated the upper jaw. The mouth was practically sealed, and when killed the animal was but a skeleton". (24)



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- 22. The Country-side September 28th 1907.
- 23. Letter from T. Hooper to R.Muirhead August 12th 1997.
- 24 Surrey Times February 1922.



A UNICORN RABBIT FROM COUNTY DURHAM

Karl Shuker

As someone passionately interested in unicorns, I have documented many different types over the years, ranging from the familiar equine version to rather more exotic counterparts - including a lethal carnivorous desert dweller with a musical flute-like horn, an ostensibly semi-aquatic form with webbed feet, an extremely bellicose bovine or even rhinocerine equivalent from Persia that could be soothed only by the calming cooing of a turtle dove, and a small hare-like but extremely malign entity from an unnamed tropical island. However, there is one particular example, which I investigated a fair few years ago but have never previously documented, that I find especially intriguing - for the simple reason that whereas most unicorns of whatever type they may be are fictitious, this one was real.

On 29 September 1982, writer Paul Screeton at the *Hartlepool Mail* published a report (subsequently picked up by other media sources, and also reproduced in his own magazine, *The Shaman* - see photo) documenting a most extraordinary pet rabbit that its owner, 9 - year- old Kathy Lister of Trimdon Grange in County Durham, England, had very aptly named Unicorn. Due to a genetic fluke, Unicorn had been born with just a single ear. Yet whereas there are numerous reports on file of individual mammals of many different species in which one or other ear is missing, Unicorn's condition was rather more special. For unlike typical one-eared individuals, her single ear was not laterally positioned, but arose instead from the centre of her head, standing upright like a long furry horn!

Intrigued by this highly unusual condition (even today, I have never encountered any additional 'median-ear' instances), I decided to pursue the case personally. So after first discussing it with Paul Screeton, in July 1988 I contacted Kathy (then aged 15) and her father James, requesting further details, and am most grateful for the following information they very kindly sent to me.

Born in Spring 1981, Unicorn was a Flemish Giant doe bred on James's farm, and she subsequently became the much-loved pet of his daughter Kathy. In more than



thirty-five years of rabbit breeding this was the only one eared rabbit that James had ever observed.



Fig 1 Kathy with Unicorn

for her median ear and that of one of her offspring was lost forever when she died in November 1986.

Judging from the 4:1 normal: mutant ratio of offspring, it is likely that the median-ear condition was induced by a recessive allele (gene form), and that Unicorn was homozygous for it (i.e possessing two copies), thereby enabling the condition to be expressed by her. If so, then it must

Fig 2 Unicorn the Flemish Giant doe.

Fig 3 (p. 54) Dr Shuker and 'The Shaman.'

In autumn 1984, Unicorn escaped from her pen, but three days later she was found, recaptured, and placed in a new hutch. Over the next month, she grew steadily fatter, and 31 days after her original escape Unicorn gave birth to a litter of five offspring. As she had never been introduced to any of the farm rabbits, it is clear therefore, that during her brief period of freedom Unicorn had encountered and mated with a wild rabbit.

Of her five offspring, four were normal, but the fifth displayed its mother's remarkable median-ear condition. Regrettably, however, all five offspring died shortly afterwards during a very severe thunderstorm, so no details of their sex are known. Happily, Unicorn survived, and lived for a further two years, but she did not give birth to any further litters, so the unidentified mutant gene presumably responsible



also be assumed that her wild mate was at least heterozygous (possessing one copy) for this same mutant allele, in order to explain the birth of the single median-eared offspring in her litter. Yet if this mutant allele is indeed present in the wild population, one might have expected it to have been expressed far more frequently (especially in animals that are famous for breeding...well, like rabbits!). Could it, therefore, be associated with some debilitating trait too, so that individuals expressing it are more vulnerable in some way to predation?

The most obvious affliction to be expected that may prove detrimental to survival in the wild is some form of hearing impairment - an occurrence that normally accompanies most ear-related mutations. Yet Kathy had observed that when Unicorn was called, she would turn towards the direction of the voice, thus suggesting that her hearing was not severely impeded (although by having only one ear, it meant - inevitably - that Unicorn`s hearing could only monoaural, not stereo).

Tragically, however, in the absence of further litters from Unicorn upon which to base breeding observations, little more can be said of her apparently unique mutation. So it is likely that its identity will remain undiscovered, unless this remarkable `unicorn ear` condition reappears one day in some other rabbit farm.

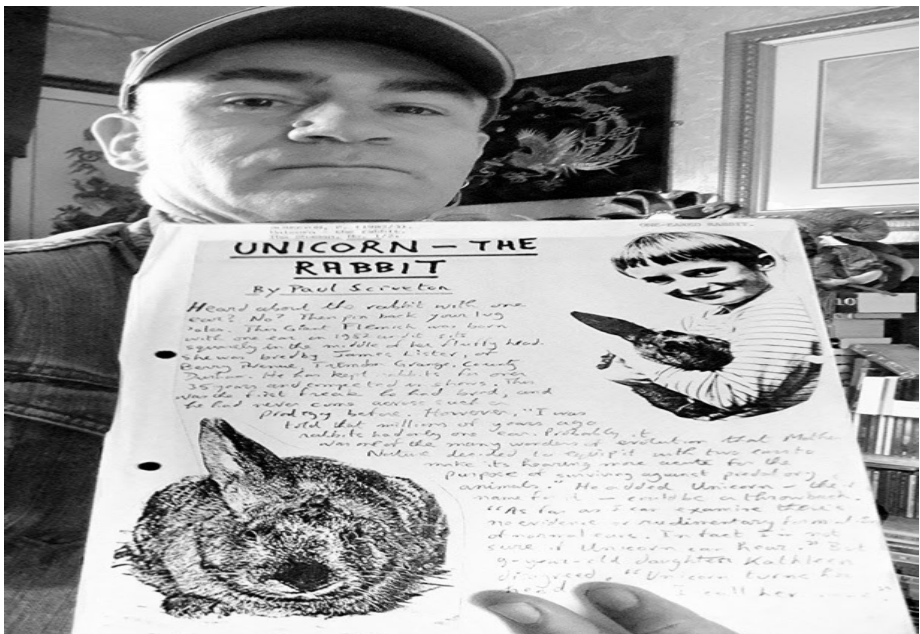


Fig 3 Dr Karl Shuker with a copy of The Shaman.

A Spotted Otter in Ireland

Richard Muirhead

This item relates to a spotted otter from Lough Sheelin, Ireland, c.1909 and my correspondence with Dr Andrew Kitchener of the National Museums of Scotland on the subject. The original story is to be found in the Irish Naturalist vol XVIII 1909, pp 141-142 by R.F.Scharff. 'On the occurrence of a speckled otter in Ireland.' "The National Museum of Ireland recently acquired from Mr W.J. Williams, of Dublin, a full-grown Otter, which differs from ordinary otters, in that its rich brown fur is spotted all over with white spots.....It was trapped in Lough Sheelin, which lies partly in the County Cavan and partly in Westmeath.

The fur, as a rule, is of a rich chestnut brown in Irish Otters. It is composed of two parts, the woolly under-fur and the longer stiffer hairs projecting beyond this. The colour of the under-fur is very light grey changing to greyish-brown above, while the longer hairs are chestnut brown throughout. On closely examining an Otter skin we sometimes find that the under fur is not quite uniformly coloured throughout. Here and there, separated by wide spaces, very small perfectly white tufts are met with in the under-fur. When these occur in such large patches as to be clearly noticeable, their presence impairs the value of the skin from a furrier's point of view. Mr Williams informs me that occasionally, amounting to about 1 per cent of the skins are speckled in this manner. The whiteness, however, in these cases, is still hidden to some extent, in the unprepared skin, by the brown colour of the long hairs. It is only after removal of the hairs by the furrier that the white spots become plainly visible.

In the specimen here figured, not only has the under-fur white patches of variable size, but the whiteness extends even to the long hairs, giving the Otter a most peculiar speckled appearance. Mr Williams tells me that, among several thousands of skins that have passed through his hands, this is the only specimen of that kind he has seen.

From the Royal Irish Academy Fauna and Flora Committee's records, I find that perfectly white Otters have been observed in the River Shannon, being, presumably true albinos, and recorded in the *Field* (vol. xci., 1898, pp.141-42). We know that an albino Otter from Scotland is preserved in the Belfast Museum, but the only record of a speckled Otter that I have noticed



is of one supposed to be in the Hancock Museum in Newcastle-on-Tyne. On applying to Mr E.L. Gill, the Curator of this Museum, about this specimen, he kindly informs me that there is no such otter in the Hancock Museum. The Irish speckled Otter now described is therefore, as far as I can ascertain, a unique specimen.

In connection with this very abnormal skin of the Otter, I re-examined the ordinary ones with a view to verifying Mr.Ogilby's statement (1) that Irish Otters differ so much from English ones as to deserve a special name. He proposed to call the Irish Otter *Lutra roensis* instead of *Lutra vulgaris* .

As there are no English skins of the Otter in the Irish National Museum, I was unable to compare the two externally. Mr.Ogilby gives the dark colour, which he describes as almost black, as the principal character of the Irish Otter. There are about half-a-dozen Irish skins in the National Museum, but none of them are darker than chestnut brown. Mr.Ogilby mentions that there are differences also in the size of the ears and in the proportions of other parts in the Otters from the two countries without, however, indicating to us anything more definite. More recently Dr. Scalter has drawn attention to this alleged difference in the fur, while William Thompson (2) thought that the skull of the Irish Otter was larger than that of the British, and stated that Dr Robert Ball considered that two Otters to be, perhaps, distinct varieties.

None of these authorities clearly define how an Irish can be discriminated from a British Otter. There are sixteen recent Otter skulls from various British and Irish localities in the National Museum. After a careful examination of these I failed to detect any character by which Irish skulls can be distinguished from British ones. At any rate we cannot argue from a comparison of a few skulls that the Irish Otter is larger than the British. The size of a species varies in every country between certain very definite limits, and, as the largest specimens are generally sent to a museum for preservation, a large series is required to determine the average size. As far as the skull is concerned, I think the Irish Otter is not, specifically, distinguishable from the British.” (3)

On 29th April 1996 Dr Andrew Kitchener wrote to me saying :

Dear Mr Muirhead, Thank you for your letter of 26th February. I am sorry that I have not been able to answer until now, but I have been tied up with various urgent projects. The otter looks most odd. I think there are two possible explanations. Either it is a hoax, or it could be a simple single gene mutation causing white spotting. This white spotting gene is known in cats and there is no reason to suppose it does not occur in otters, although as in most wild mammals, these gene mutations are rare. Anyway, thank you for sending me the photocopy- it is a most unusual otter indeed. Yours sincerely, Dr Andrew Kitchener.(4)



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Fig 1 The Spotted Irish Otter of Lough Sheelin.



Fig 2
Approximate
Location of
Otter



Reactions to Flying Snake 1

Karl Shuker kindly gave me permission to reproduce his Shuker Nature blog of April 16th 2011 which commented as follows on Flying Snake 1:

“It’s always great to see a new cryptozoological periodical, especially one in hard-copy form, with pages that you can touch and turn with your fingers instead of with an impersonal, intangible tap of a stylus - call me old fashioned, but for all their promise of instant access, e-books to me are nothing more than soulless text, whereas a real book is also an experience, even a friend, to enjoy and rejoice in. So I welcome with unadulterated enthusiasm the long-awaited, much anticipated first issue (April 2011) of *Flying Snake* - fellow cryptozoological investigator Richard Muirhead’s brand-new hardcopy journal of cryptozoology, folklore and forteana.” (Having said that, Richard does plan to publish a pdf version in due course, but he will continue with the hard-copy version too)

“Like me, Richard has a particular interest in unearthing very unusual and obscure reports from the literature and in collecting hitherto unpublicised accounts from correspondents, and *Flying Snake* certainly does not disappoint. Within its professionally-produced 68 pages, it covers a veritable crypto-cornucopia of extraordinary subjects from around the globe - including reports of flying snakes (naturally!) from Wales, as well as unidentified flying lizards in Australia, pinked tusked elephants from China, the devil crabs of South Shields, a mermaid from Israel, a couple of fascinating Nandi bear reports that were new to me, giant centipedes in Hong Kong, an article by me concerning a previously obscure equine cryptid from Iberia, and lots more! “

With a planned publication schedule of 3 issues per year, at a cost of just £3 per issue or £9 per annum, *Flying Snake* promises to be a very worthy investment for anyone interested in cryptozoology and wider animal-related mysteries or anomalies.

Marco Masseti commented thus on Flying Snake 1 in an e-mail to me of April 23rd 2011:” Dear Richard, I just received the copy of the first issue of *Flying Snake*. Compliments, this is a very amazing and interesting publication.”

All the best Marco.



Matt Bille, one-time editor of Exotic Zoology wrote the following on his web site Matt's Sci/Tech Blog <http://mattbille.blogspot.com/> May 25th 2011

Neat new cryptozoology magazine

"Richard Muirhead sent me the first issue of his new " Journal of Cryptozoology, Folklore, and Forteana," *Flying Snake* . It's not a journal in the peer-reviewed sense, but a very enjoyable little magazine. The printing is crisp and professional, the articles generally well written, and the correspondence included from Richard's files very interesting. It strays to the borders of cryptozoology and beyond (cf. Richard's own piece insisting the Biblical story of Ezekiel's wheels was a supernatural event and not a UFO), but it's Richard's magazine and he can address anything he wants. A notable feature is that not one article addresses the "classic monsters" of cryptozoology, and I found that quite refreshing!

I loved the color photo of an orange badger (really!) on the back cover."

Fortean Times October 2011 no. 280 p. 65 featured a pleasing review as follows:

"FLYING SNAKE New periodicals within our broad remit are as rare as sightings of flying snakes.....Oh look! Here's one! Let's welcome this new journal dedicated to the intersection of forteana with cryptozoology and folklore, edited and published by Richard Muirhead, a veteran of these subjects. The first issue carries articles on pink tusked elephants in China, giant centipedes in Hong Kong, a Dorset wild cat, an Israeli mermaid, the Nandi bear, flying lizards and Ezekiel's Chariot (but this seems to be a flyer for a `Christian` ufology site!")



Notes and Queries

Richard Muirhead would like to know whether anyone has heard of a **phobia of butterflies**.

I would also like to hear about the story of Richard 1 , Richard the Lionheart (reigned 1189-1199) introducing the **Mute Swan** from Cyprus to England.

The image on page 49 of a rabbit with tusks prompted me to do a bit of research on the old Net and this threw up as many questions as the original **rabbit with tusks** story .Particularly, from the 'Jackalope Cousins?'(1) web site. Please can anyone express an opinion as to the identity of the following?:(I am placing these stories in date order though on the web site the last story appears first.)

In 1572, the Corando (2) expedition searching for the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola, recorded seeing a 'lion-rabbit' pouncing upon its prey from a low tree. This was discounted as the expedition recorded numerous new species that were unfamiliar to the Old World explorers.

In 1878, a Tombstone Arizona prospector known only as 'Pete', arrived in town with stories of being attacked by a creature that moved too swiftly to be identified. Pete appeared badly scratched with two puncture marks just under the knee. Quills were also found in Pete's clothing giving evidence of a struggle with the creature.

From an unidentified source by e-mail:

Officials and leading zoologists are baffled over a 1996 sighting of a previously thought of legendary animal. The creature, locally called a '**Razor-Jack**', was reportedly sighted in an area of the McDowell Mountains,north-east of Phoenix Arizona.

The Sabre-tooth Bristled Hare was described as looking just like the common jackrabbit but with two distinguishing features;tusks and a patch of quills(like a porcupine's) on the animal's back. The tusks are apparently similar to the exten-



-ded canine teeth of the region's Javelina or collared Peccary. Interestingly also is the fact that a Javelina's coat is not fur but is made of hollow quills. This startling implication has officials putting a tight lid on this story. While unusual, this sighting only reinforces other sightings recorded in history that have made 'Razor-Jack' a legend.”(3)

REFERENCES

1. Jackalope Cousins? <http://users.stargate.net/~mnovak/jackalopes/cousins.htm>
2. This expedition actually took place between 1540-1542 in N.Mexico and the S.W U.S.A.
- 3 Jackalope Cousins ? web site op cit.

A homing snake: I was told by a friend that he had read in the Macclesfield Express in around 2001 about a snake that had been trained to find its way home to its owner from one part of Macclesfield to another, a distance of about 2 miles across busy roads and parks. Is such a thing possible and has it been heard of before?

Some notes from John Aubrey's **Natural History of Wiltshire** (written between 1656 and 1691) might be of interest:

“In Cranborn Chase and at Vernditch are some martens still remaining...In Wiley river are otters, and perhaps in others. The otter is our English bever; and Mr Meredith Lloyd saies that in the river Tivy in Carmarthenshire there were real bevers heretofore- now extinct. Dr Powell, in his History of Wales, speakes of it. They are both alike; fine furred, and their tayles like a fish. (The otter hath a hairy round tail, not like the beavers-J.RAY).....In warrens are found, but rarely, some old stotes, quite white: that is, they are ermins.”(1)”In Sir James Long's parke at Draycot-Cerne are grey lizards; and no question in other places if they were look't after; but people take them for newts....At Neston Parke (Col.W.Eire's) in Cosham Parish are huge snakes, an ell ¹ long; and about Devizes snakes do abound. Mrs Fr. Tyndale, of Priorie St. Maries, when a child, voyded a lumbricus biceps. Mr Wincellaus Hollar, when he was at Mechlin, saw an amphisbæna,² which he did

¹ That is, 45 inches.

² See Richard Muirhead 'The Amphisbæna in Britain and Ireland' CFZ Yearbook 2011'



very curiously delineate, and coloured it in water colours, of the very colour: it was exactly the colour of the inner peeel of an onyon: it was about six inches long, but in its repture it made the figure of a semicircle;both the heads advancing equally. It was found under a piece of old timber, about 1661; under the jawes it had barbes like a barbel, which did strengthen his motion in running. This draught, amongst a world of others, Mr. Thom.Chaffinch,of Whitehall,hath; for which Mr. Hollar protested to me he had no compensation. The diameter was about that of a slo-worme; and I guess it was an amphisbænal slo-worme.³” [“The serpents called amphisbæna are so designated....in consequence of their ability to move backwards as well as forwards. The head and tail of the amphisbæna are very similar in form: whence the common belief that it possesses a head at each extremity. It was formerly supposed that cutting off one its “heads” would fail to destroy this animal; and that its flesh, dried and pulverised, was an infallible remedy for dislocations and broken bones-J.B.” (2)]

REFERENCES 1. Aubrey`s Natural History of
Wiltshire p.50 2. Ibid p. 74



John Aubrey (1626-1697)

Wikipedia Creative Commons

³ How I would dearly like to find out if this illustration survives somewhere.I contacted the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford but that lead went nowhere. Richard.



BOOK REVIEWS

Varmints Chad Arment Coachwhip Publications 2010 (ISBN 1-61646-019-9 ISBN-13 978-1-61646-019-8)

This book is so good a law should be passed, backed up by the United Nations or U.S Government saying it ought to be on your shelf, or that of your friends whether they are cryptozoologists or not. If Chad intended his all 682 pages of his book to be a kind of encyclopaedia of N.American cryptid carnivores then he certainly achieved his goal. He humbly states however that it is a “preliminary investigation.” I hope Chad is planning similar books to go alongside *Varmints* and his earlier *Boss Snakes* for other members of the animal kingdom, say marine life, birds etc? *Varmints* is divided into the following chapters: What accounts for *Varmints*?, Native Carnivores, Exotic Carnivores, Varmint Folklore, *Varmints* by State and Province, Evidentiary Requirements. Appendix A: Predator Kill Patterns, Appendix B: Basic Profiles and Tracks and Bibliography. There are also black and white illustrations of the animals mentioned and occasionally one of the cryptids included e.g the giant otter caught in N.Maine in 1949 on p.82 and the equally extraordinary European Wild Cat, killed in N. Pennsylvania, 1922, on pp 542-543, which Chad makes clear from the newspaper extracts he includes, may not have been as scarce in N.America as first thought.

Chad explains that “*Varmints*” is a name given to “ the first folkloric step in creating the perception of a distinctive animal , separating it from the commonality of known predators and elevating it to ethnoknown status, even if it later turns out to be mundane.” (p.9) Even within well known species such as the bear there are species newly or fairly recently discovered such as the lava bear or dwarf grizzly bear of south-eastern Oregon and possibly adjacent Idaho. The whole picture is complicated by a plethora of misunderstandings and invented words (e.g “Dwayyo,” “Glawakus”, etc.)

The vast majority of the book is composed of historical reports from newspapers from Alamaba through to the Yukon Territory, by state and province, from the 19th century through to the present day and not just the obvious critters such as panthers and lynxes but also less likely candidates such as wolverines, margays



and also coatis occurring beyond their normal range. It needs to be pointed out that the author deliberately excludes the eastern cougar “ which technically is not cryptozoological. “ (p.18) There is a thorough bibliography.

My only minor recommendation is that due to the great length and weight of Chad's book it might have been better to split it into two or three volumes. Dr Devo's major recommendation, rather decree, is don't be a 'Blockhead' (N.B.Devo fans) - buy it!

Big Cats Loose in Britain Marcus Matthews CFZ Press 2007 (ISBN 978-1905723-12-6)

Here is another substantial work of cryptozoological erudition, though somewhat less deep in its scope in comparison to Varmints. In Part 1 there is an introduction and coverage of S.W Britain's mystery cats. Part 2 covers the Surrey Puma and other S.E big cats, Part 3 covers the rest of the country. Marcus is particularly strong in his coverage of the Exmoor beasts and Surrey pumas, spending 45 worthwhile pages on the former and 65 on the latter. I did not know that the Exmoor beasts go back as far as the 1870s having become aware of them in 1983. However there is a big gap in Surrey puma sightings between the possible one by William Cobbett's in 1770 and the next probable cases in the 1950s, undermining Marcus's case elsewhere in the book that big cats in Britain may originate as hybrids from Roman times. The Romans army withdrew from Britain to defend Rome c. 410AD

The whole Exmoor beasts saga is far more complicated than the British media would have us believe, judging by Marcus research.[Di Francis research is mentioned with Marcus wisely reminding the reader that her theories “ proved too much for some learned scientists” (p.14)] Not only has there been a possible unique species of British big cat (see Francis) in Devon and Somerset but even lynxes and a werewolf are claimed as candidates! (the werewolves were on Exmoor and Dartmoor). Marcus is less strong in Part 3 of the book spending less time on the Isle of Wight mystery cats, Welsh mystery cats, mystery cats in the Midland and the Upper Shires and Northern mystery cats. More space could have been spent on the Appendix: Other Mystery Animals of Britain but I concede it's impossible to trace every single anomaly/escapee.



Kraken 3 Dépt de cryptozoologie Bernard Heuvelmans Musée de zoologie Lausanne Mai 2011 (ISSN 1662-4696)

Kraken is the occasional publication of the Dépt de cryptozoologie Bernard Heuvelmans but it is well worth the wait. Unfortunately for me, more than half of issue 3 is in French for obvious reasons. I cannot read French. Issue 3 strongly concentrates on mystery hominids. The English language essays are:-

Gustave Sánchez Romero.

Olitiau and Kongamato: African winged reptiles: The fabulous pterodactyls of the black continent. 33-47

Michael A. Woodley.

Introducing Aequivotaxa: A new classification system for cryptozoology. 63-85

Both these are very interesting and worthwhile in their own particular way, though I found Woodley's difficult. Romero's particularly appealed to me because of my own interest in Namibia's flying snake. It is good to know Heuvelman's archives are getting a wider airing despite the continuing absence of many of his books in English. However hopefully Kraken will grow in popularity thus increasing the likelihood that more of Heuvelman's research will be revealed. I have a feeling this will happen.

The French articles are as follows: -

Benoit Grison.

Psychologie soviétique, histoire sociale et anthropogenese la "lutte pour les troglodytes" de Boris Porchnev 3-19

Annette Jubara

La recherche de l'origine de l'homme chez Boris Porchnev 21-31

Florent Barrere

L'imaginaire du Poulpe colossal 49-61

Yannis Deliyannis

Jean Céard, La nature et les prodiges: L'insolite au XVI siecle. 89-92



Letters to Flying Snake



Here is an old letter from Dr Sigrid Schmidt, an expert on the Flying Snake of Namibia:

Dr. Sigrid Schmidt

Hildesheim, 16.9.95

Am Neuen Teiche 5

D-31139 Hildesheim

Dear Mr Muirhead,

Thank you very much for your letter which I received this week. Certainly I can give you some information on the strange Namibian snakes. For they belong to the foremost topics of Nama legends and folkbelief, a field in which I have specialized.

Like the ghosts or UFOs in Europe, these snakes are seen by people who believe in them. And people who do not believe in them do not see them. A teacher once sarcastically told me: If at night people see the light of a motor-bike or a car where only one light is working people say: Oh, there is the snake again! And there are many people who delight to tell tales how they saw the snake or about other people who met the snake. Usually quite a number of different traits are attributed to these snakes, each narrator stresses different ones: its stench which alone kills people and attracts swarms of flies, its call which sounds like sheep or goats calling, the light, lamp, mirror, stone or white spot in the forehead, its face like a man's face, sometimes even with a beard, its horns or ears,



its fondness for women. In dry Namibia the snake (which is usually called the big Snake) lives in the mountains, but in the permanent rivers, particularly the Oranje River, its aquarian equivalent lives in the water, has a palace under the water and keeps there his human wives which he steals at the shore. These snakes belong to the very ancient belief in Africa and in other continents as well. In southern Africa there are rock paintings of prehistoric times of huge snakes which probably were connected to rain or rain ceremonies.

As to the flying snake in particular: Usually this snake has no wings but uses the end of its tail to push itself through the air to the next point. And as to the reporter of the 1942 accounts: the policeman Honeyborne was known as a very good narrator and experienced quite a number of extraordinary things.

I published a few tales about such mythical snakes in my book “Marchen aus Namibia” (Koln:Diederichs,1980), pp.232-236, and I shall devote a chapter on it in the book on Namibian legends which I am working now.

I hope this brief information will help you a little. If you need more, please, just write me. But the field of African mythical snakes is endless because of the many ancient connections to religion and ceremony.

Yours sincerely, S.Schmidt

The following e-mail came from Irene Brierton of the Mid Derbyshire Badger Group on March 29th 2011. The “erythrismic badger specimen” she refers to is the one on the back cover of Flying Snake 1.

“Dear Richard

Your orange coloured badger was an example of a variant in colour known as erythrismic, much the same sort of thing as black, grey squirrels, which occur in some parts of Britain, described as melanistic. The colour results from the presence of a recessive gene, present in the genetic make up within some social groups of badgers.

Being a recessive gene, an erythrismic animal may breed its whole life through producing only normal coloured young, however the gene will be passed on resulting, sometimes generations later, in another similarly coloured badger. This



colour can vary in individuals from pale fawn, through distinct ginger, to more rarely a quite dark reddish brown colour.

This gene is present within some social groups of animals in Derbyshire, as it is in other parts of the country, but I understand there are areas where it is much less evident, if not absent altogether.

The High Peak Badger Group deal with badger issues in the far north of the county and your badger may belong to them. I cannot remember if they have an erythristic specimen and if they do I am pretty sure they will not be prepared to sell it to anyone. They can be contacted on 01298 26957. The Mid Derbyshire Badger Group have an erythristic badger specimen which we take on talks, along with a couple of normal coloured individuals. Ours originated as an unfortunate road casualty we had been informed about and is not for sale. Although we do occasionally receive reports of these dead animals being found, by far the majority of such reports are of normal coloured badgers. We do not save them as a matter of course and they are usually disposed of in the usual way.

Regards

Irene Brierton

Below is an extract from an e-mail to me of April 13th 2010 from John Didier, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Associate Professor, Department of History Colorado State University concerning the black pink tusked elephants of T'ang dynasty China which I covered in Flying Snake 1. I had tucked away this e-mail in a file somewhere and fortunately found it. The first paragraph covers what Schafer had to say in 'The Vermillion Bird' about the elephant. In the following two paragraphs Didier provides more information as follows:

".....I've also checked the Chinese text of the 16th-century "Chinese Materia Medica" (Bencao gangmu), the standard (and enormous) encyclopaedia of these types of zoological, botanical, medicinal, etc. notices in/from Chinese history/civilization, but while the treatment of elephant is fairly lengthy, there is no mention of these black elephants with pink tusks from Nam Viet. Probably, then, there won't be much to find.

Schafer doesn't actually say anything that I have found about the extinction (timing or otherwise) of this type of elephant, and I'm not certain from where the websites that you referenced in your email might have obtained their



estimate/report that these elephants went extinct in the 14th century. I would think that either report would be questionable in its accuracy-in that world in which most of Vietnam was still undisturbed forested mountain territory inhabited by virtually or totally undisturbed forested mountain territory inhabited by virtually or totally undisturbed Neolithic tribes,how would one really know when/if these elephants had become extinct.



GIANT TURTLE CAUGHT NEAR BRISBANE



A YEREN IN A MACCLESFIELD ANTIQUUE SHOP?

The photograph below shows a statue of a wild man
In Aladdin`s Cave, an antiques shop in my home
town.



Image on page 70
from The Mercury,
Hobart, January 14th
1947. Thanks to Trove
and National Library
of Australia.



This poster, left, alerted
Chinese people to look
out for the Yeren. There
is a distinct similarity to
the model above. Thanks
to Loren Coleman for
permission to reproduce.